AMERICAN POETRY

Isaac Carlson

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An Anthology of

AMERICAN POETRY

LYRIC AMERICA

1630-1941

Edited by

ALFRED KREYMBORG

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TO THE POETS

OF AMERICA

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PREFACE

SOME time before "Our Singing Strength," a survey of American poetry, appeared, I had planned an anthology which should serve as a companion volume, and as an independent volume. Though the books are clearly related, and I naturally hope that people who read one will also read the other, I have tried to make the second fairly complete in itself. Despite a congenital suspicion of the brood of anthologists (including myself) who have issued book after book during the past fifteen years, I felt that an effort should be made toward producing at least one more: a comprehensive collection ranging from Pilgrim days to ours. Since Stedman's heroic anthology (1787-1900), several historical anthologies have appeared, none of which equal the Wall Street broker's in thoroughness of approach and breadth of interest. In opening with Freneau and the Revolutionary period, instead of the Colonial period, he shut out but one real poet, Anne Bradstreet, and a few anonymous poems, such as "Bacon's Epitaph." The present anthology includes a group of Colonial poems rendering little more than the primitive spirit and background of our forefathers. It is easy to argue now that Stedman's book was too inclusive, and that many of his selections are downright absurdities. It is easier still to detect the slight toward Emily Dickinson. She is there, but not in her true proportion: a posthumous treasure our century discovered. With decided esthetic reservations, I prefer Stedman's eclectic method, at his or even our young day in poetic history, to a method restricting editorial industry to a single critical standard. The single standard is the one to apply among lands old and deep-rooted in poetry: China, India, Greece, Italy, France, England. Time has matured among them and limned the living perspectives.

Indigenous American poetry began with Bryant. Barely more than a century old, it is still in the midst of adventure and de-

velopment. Not even the confident critic has the essential detachment for a final appraisal of our labors. I have a preference for inconclusive conclusions to human problems, and find more meat in suspended opinions than I can find in finalities. This view would doubtless prove distasteful and be rejected in current intellectual circles. The battle for authority among our critics (vide the Humanists and the anti-Humanists) is an interesting phenomenon to the student of racial tendencies. Behind the issues involved (whose mutual vagueness stimulates further controversy), American criticism literally dominates the cultural scene. Answering a sturdy demand for an analysis of our creative records, criticism aimed at firm definitions and standards whereby artists should be measured and judged. In the last few years, and especially in the year of grace, 1930, what has happened? Advancing criticism has won powers relegating the thing and person criticized to a dimmer and dimmer secondary plane. Mere critical tyros (given more space in our magazines than mature artists receive) learn the lordly tone overnight and dispense their patronage among diminutive artists pictorially kissing the shadows and dust of the throne. Since poets are the lowest members of an economic order, they are generally the easiest targets for the excathedraic tone. Many crawl to their feet in self-defense, and attack the critics with the critics' own weapons. A sadder human error was never conceived nor acted upon.

Any poet, no matter how great or minor, needs the whole of his energies, critical as well as creative, toward functioning as an artist, the more so as the competitive phases of an art test his name in a gamut of kingly names ranging back through the centuries. Criticism per se, sound and helpful though the best of it is, is comparatively temporal in the universal scheme. A moment's thought on the glories of the past finds the memory first responding to the genius of poetry. It is humiliating for the contemporary poet to see samples of his work crammed into periodical corners the while his critics and critics who ignore him play on public orchestras. Since this is an experience descending from his forefathers, he had better swallow his share

of a disproportionate bargain. Stingy economic rewards will give him little time to master the ever increasing and growingly difficult problems of his art. But grow the fellow must, with or without social nourishment, if his art is to mature and survive. The traditional garret, and not the market-place, is still his domain. Nor should the critical forum (especially not early in life) tempt his intelligence.

Coleridge is an earlier and Eliot a recent example of poets rearing critical structures by way of defining poetry on the one hand and on the other, of subtly exposing a parallel defense of private esthetic aims. Their subsequent poetry lost the concentrated vitality of their ardent young manhood. The demands of a critical basis (recurring at the opening or close of each new period in art) diverted the energies of the author of "Kubla Khan" and the author of "Prufrock" toward composing the "Biographia Literaria" and "The Sacred Wood." The later books are noble events in criticism, but they can never supplant "Kubla Khan" and "Prufrock," nor console one reader for the loss of further poetry, greater in range and stature. An uncultivated yokel by comparison, Whitman had the insight to demand "the theory after the performance." The Leaves did not require a theoretic system—though Walt made occasional dabs in that direction. The Leaves are poems which contain an intrinsic esthetic standard for self-judgment, and imply or inspire criticism of all other poetry. The poetic function unites all the available human functions inside a given personality. Obviously, the ingredients vary with each person, and no single standard of taste can say quite the last word regarding comparative values. Since taste changes as often as its human possessor changes, one can only pity the man who pronounces finalities—especially in a land as culturally adolescent as ours. Objective or quasi objective criticism is an extremely difficult medium. The few men who have mastered it at all are deserving of profoundly grateful trophies. Unhappily, such men are being obscured by clouds of controversialists neatly hiding private ambitions behind impersonal masks. The will to supreme authority is not alone a powerful deterrent to American criticism. It is a

still more powerful deterrent to American poetry. We do not ask that poetry be coddled along. It is rich enough and strong enough to meet as well as to merit scientific scrutiny.

This allegorical homily may also be applied to the editor or anthologist. Whether the latter writes or avoids a preface, his collection reflects personal aims and tastes. If he decides on a preface, the man must be partly ordered by a conscience whose urbane excuses court a favorable reception. Admitting these advances, let me sketch in the steps through which this book was compiled, and retrace its definite, though incomplete or imperfect program. I have to return for a moment to "Our Singing Strength." While inclusiveness played a leading motive throughout the survey, I realized, in the midst of its labors, that I could never fulfill this phase of the program. Here and there in the text, hints revealed the author's groping personality as the guiding spirit of the book, a spirit conditioned and hampered by a given temperament. As the work proceeded, these self-apparent limitations were aggravated by the knowledge that no matter how many reference books were consulted, there were hundreds I had ignored or knew nothing of. Each book studied and cut off my list of required reading turned hydra-headed. It would have been a smoother and pleasanter task had I planned a survey dwelling on the high lights of our poetry, each arrayed in judicious chapters. But the little fellows along the road constantly demanded attention by virtue of some poem contributing something to the march. And, as I had set myself the kindred task of relating the march to our racial development, once important records, dead or moribund now, had to be placed in the general scheme. Long before the last page was written, I knew that I was writing, not a survey, but an outline—incomplete and inconclusive. Notwithstanding praise paid to the book's apparent thoroughness "by friend and foe alike," I have learned since its publication that certain poets were unfairly slighted. Courteous correspondents aided me there and likewise called attention to a number of errors. The errors will be corrected in their proper place. Most of the slights are relieved in the present volume.

Preface

A man who attempts an experiment on the heels of a former experiment must seem incredibly mad or foolish. Nonetheless, I felt that the subjective nature of an anthology allows the poet in the man to review and collate stimuli he owes to our former poets, contemporary poets, and poets of the younger generation. These varied men and women are part of the heritage of any American poet, subject of course to what he considers the main sources of his inspirational reading. Some of us acknowledge little or no indebtedness to the past, and not much more to the present and what begins to look like the future. Others, apparently more grateful or generous, pay praise solely to those with aspirations similar to their own. A third group, doubtless somewhat older than the first two, are aware that they also owe something to temperaments foreign to their own, and, if animated by the current movement toward unearthing all the records showing our racial development, they cannot quite ignore inimical poets. The present book and its predecessor belong among investigations instigated by the third group. To reprint all my own stimuli would require too much room. Since certain poets deserve a broader representation than I have the space for, groups of poems have been selected with a view of presenting a series of embryonic gamuts indicating varying degrees of originality. These are the outstanding groups in the volume. Poems notable for their evocation of a Zeitgeist take a secondary place; likewise limited numbers of formerly popular poems, of pioneer verse introducing sectional values, and of occasional and humorous verse. The principal elements of the book have been determined by an esthetic order—with due allowance to our proverbial friend, De Gustibus.

Having reread old books and anthologies and having read many others for the first time (not to mention a host of unpublished verse), I realize again that among the thousands of Americans who have written poetry (much of which is inaccessible), it is impossible to make a wholly satisfying selection. In the last analysis, any selection has an air of static finality which fails to embrace all the dynamic properties of a national or individual movement. It seems to me, however, that a book can

be arranged in an order reflecting an inherent dynamism and anticipating a continuous order of energies. This book, then, representing the editorial adventure of one man among his fellows, reveals a personal taste somewhat restricted by exigencies of space and esthetically compromised by considerations of an historical and psychological order. In an effort to view American poetry en masse and to bring enough of that view into a gamut embryonic of the whole movement, selections have been made from the work of about two hundred and sixty poets. (In several instances, publishers have limited their permissions to a given number of poems: vide William Vaughn Moody, Edward Rowland Sill, Edna St. Vincent Millay. And, in other instances, I have had to cut out poems for which too high a permission fee was asked. I sincerely regret the absence of Edgar Lee Masters, in this connection. And the absence of two younger poets who declined to appear in the book.)

To the person who comes to the conclusion, hastily stated as a rule—There are too many poets here—I can only reply: Too few, more likely. And to the "friend or foe" who imagines the book was inspired, like its predecessor, by "generosity," I can only say: The motives were rather motives of fair play, modified by vague ideas as to just what comprises fair play. The sense of justice is purely idiosyncratic. So is its lofty brother, the sense of authority. The current battle for intellectual supremacy is dangerous whenever it flaunts criticism as an impregnable standard and obscures any genuine system of thought for the dynamo it is or should be. Criticism of the critic again applies to the editor or anthologist. The latter may try to collate the best collection and convince himself that his is the best so far. Even if it were the best, it cannot be perfect. He will know in his heart it cannot be. And, if he cares more for poetry than himself, he will see, even before publication, where some of his errors lie, and genially accept correction at the hands of tomorrow's poets, critics, historians and editors. He will see that he has made, not the final, but just one more contribution to our growing culture, and that his contribution, whether made in vanity or service, can have no effect unless readers find it stimu-

lating. And readers will find a stimulus tempered and generated by their own lives, tastes and demands. Like as not, antagonism to the book will provide the first energy in this new process. The ideal reader, in the deepest, subtlest guise, is an imaginary editor and author. The best I can hope for this book is that the reader read it through and find cause therein, one way or another, for composing his own anthology. American poetry is broad enough to contain many incipient anthologies. The more the editors disagree, the better for the game I love most. "For"—to quote the closing line of the prelude to "Our Singing Strength"—"American poetry, young though it is, is richer than anything any one man can sing or say about it."

A. K.

Publishers' Note

This Second Revised Edition brings *Lyric America* up to date by adding outstanding young poets whose poems first appeared during the last five years and whose names belong to the great tradition of our poetry.

Author of

OUR SINGING STRENGTH
MANHATTAN MEN
THE LOST SAIL
MUSHROOMS
BLOOD OF THINGS
LESS LONELY
SCARLET AND MELLOW
PUPPET PLAYS
PLAYS FOR MERRY ANDREWS
ROCKING CHAIRS
THERE'S A MOON TONIGHT
FUNNYBONE ALLEY
TROUBADOUR

Editor of

OTHERS FOR 1916
OTHERS FOR 1917
OTHERS FOR 1919

Associate Editor of

THE AMERICAN CARAVAN
(1927, 1928, 1929, 1930)

PART ONE

NEW ENGLAND'S ANNOYANCES

(*Probably the first verses written by a colonist: circa 1630. Author's name unknown.*)

New England's annoyances, you that would
know them,
Pray ponder these verses which briefly do
show them.

The place where we live is a wilderness wood,
Where grass is much wanting that's fruitful and good:
Our mountains and hills and our valleys below
Being commonly cover'd with ice and with snow:
And when the northwest wind with violence blows,
Then every man pulls his cap over his nose:
But if any's so hardy and will it withstand,
He forfeits a finger, a foot, or a hand.

But when the spring opens, we then take the hoe,
And make the ground ready to plant and to sow;
Our corn being planted and seed being sown,
The worms destroy much before it is grown;
And when it is growing some spoil there is made
By birds and by squirrels that pluck up the blade;
And when it is come to full corn in the ear,
It is often destroy'd by raccoon and by deer.

And now do our garments begin to grow thin,
And wool is much wanted to card and to spin;
If we can get a garment to cover without,
Our other in-garments are clout upon clout:
Our clothes we brought with us are apt to be torn,
They need to be clouted soon after they're worn;

But clouting our garments they hinder us nothing,
Clouts double are warmer than single whole clothing.

If fresh meat be wanting, to fill up our dish,
We have carrots and pumpkins and turnips and fish:
And is there a mind for a delicate dish,
We repair to the clam banks, and *there* we catch fish.
Instead of pottage and puddings and custards and pies,
Our pumpkins and parsnips are common supplies;
We have pumpkins at morning and pumpkins at noon;
If it was not for pumpkins we should be undone.

. . . . . .

Now while some are going let others be coming,
For while liquor's boiling it must have a scumming;
But I will not blame them, for birds of a feather,
By seeking their fellows, are flocking together.
But you whom the *Lord* intends hither to bring,
Forsake not the honey for fear of the sting,
But bring both a quiet and contented mind,
And all needful blessings you surely will find.

BACON'S EPITAPH, MADE BY HIS MAN

Death, why so cruel? What! no other way
To manifest thy spleen, but thus to slay
Our hopes of safety, liberty, our all,
Which, through thy tyranny, with him must fall
To its late chaos? Had thy rigid force
Been dealt by retail, and not thus in gross,
Grief had been silent. Now we must complain,
Since thou, in him, hast more than thousand slain,
Whose lives and safeties did so much depend
On him their life, with him their lives must end.
If't be a sin to think Death brib'd can be
We must be guilty; say 'twas bribery
Guided the fatal shaft. Virginia's foes,
To whom for secret crimes just vengeance owes

Anonymous

Deserved plagues, dreading their just desert,
Corrupted Death by Paracelsian art
Him to destroy; whose well tried courage such,
Their heartless hearts, nor arms, nor strength could touch.
  Who now must heal those wounds, or stop that blood
The heathen made, and drew into a flood?
Who is't must plead our cause? nor trump, nor drum
Nor deputations; these, alas! are dumb
And cannot speak. Our Arms (though ne'er so strong)
Will want the aid of his commanding tongue,
Which conquer'd more than Cæsar. He o'erthrew
Only the outward frame: this could subdue
The rugged works of nature. Souls replete
With dull chill'd cold, he'd animate with heat
Drawn forth of reason's limbec. In a word,
Mars and Minerva both in him concurred
For arts, for arms, whose pen and sword alike
As Cato's did, may admiration strike
Into his foes; while they confess withal
It was their guilt styl'd him a criminal.
Only this difference doth from truth proceed:
They in the guilt, he in the name must bleed,
While none shall dare his obsequies to sing
In deserv'd measures; until time shall bring
Truth crown'd with freedom, and from danger free
To sound his praises to posterity.
  Here let him rest; while we this truth report
He's gone from hence unto a higher Court
To plead his cause, where he by this doth know
Whether to Cæsar he was friend, or foe.

ANNE BRADSTREET (1613-1672)

THE FLESH AND THE SPIRIT

In secret place where once I stood,
Close by the banks of lacrym flood,

I heard two sisters reason on
Things that are past and things to come.
One Flesh was called, who had her eye
On worldly wealth and vanity;
The other Spirit, who did rear
Her thoughts unto a higher sphere.
"Sister," quoth Flesh, "what livest thou on—
Nothing but meditation?
Doth contemplation feed thee, so
Regardlessly to let earth go?
Can speculation satisfy
Notion without reality?
Dost dream of things beyond the moon,
And dost thou hope to dwell there soon?
Hast treasures there laid up in store
That all in the world thou countest poor?
Art fancy sick, or turned a sot,
To catch at shadows which are not?
Come, come, I'll show unto thy sense
Industry hath its recompense.
What canst desire but thou mayst see
True substance in variety?
Dost honor like? Acquire the same,
As some to their immortal fame,
And trophies to thy name erect
Which wearing time shall ne'er deject.
For riches dost thou long full sore?
Behold enough of precious store;
Earth hath more silver, pearls, and gold
Than eyes can see or hands can hold.
Affectest thou pleasure? Take thy fill;
Earth hath enough of what you will.
Then let not go what thou mayst find
For things unknown, only in mind."

Anne Bradstreet

Spirit

"Be still, thou unregenerate part;
Disturb no more my settled heart,
For I have vowed, and so will do,
Thee as a foe still to pursue,
And combat with thee will and must
Until I see thee laid in the dust.
Sisters we are, yea, twins we be,
Yet deadly feud 'twixt thee and me;
For from one father are we not.
Thou by old Adam was begot,
But my arise is from above,
Whence my dear Father I do love.
Thou speakest me fair, but hatest me sore;
Thy flattering shows I'll trust no more.
How oft thy slave hast thou me made
When I believed what thou hast said,
And never had more cause of woe
Than when I did what thou bad'st do.
I'll stop mine ears at these thy charms,
And count them for my deadly harms.
Thy sinful pleasures I do hate,
Thy riches are to me no bait,
Thine honors do nor will I love,
For my ambition lies above.
My greatest honor it shall be
When I am victor over thee,
And triumph shall, with laurel head,
When thou my captive shalt be led.
How I do live thou needst not scoff,
For I have meat thou knowst not of:
The hidden manna I do eat,
The word of life it is my meat.
My thoughts do yield me more content
Than can thy hours in pleasure spent.
Nor are they shadows which I catch,
Nor fancies vain at which I snatch.

But reach at things that are so high
Beyond thy dull capacity.
Eternal substance I do see,
With which enrichèd I would be;
Mine eye doth pierce the heavens, and see
What is invisible to thee.
My garments are not silk or gold,
Nor such like trash which earth doth hold,
But royal robes I shall have on,
More glorious than the glistering sun.
My crown not diamonds, pearls, and gold,
But such as angels' heads enfold.
The city where I hope to dwell
There's none on earth can parallel:
The stately walls, both high and strong,
Are made of precious jasper stone;
The gates of pearl both rich and clear,
And angels are for porters there;
The streets thereof transparent gold,
Such as no eye did e'er behold;
A crystal river there doth run,
Which doth proceed from the Lamb's throne;
Of life there are the waters sure,
Which shall remain for ever pure;
Of sun or moon they have no need,
For glory doth from God proceed—
No candle there, nor yet torch-light,
For there shall be no darksome night.
From sickness and infirmity
For evermore they shall be free,
Nor withering age shall e'er come there,
But beauty shall be bright and clear.
This city pure is not for thee,
For things unclean there shall not be.
If I of Heaven may have my fill,
Take thou the world, and all that will."

BENJAMIN THOMSON (1640-1714)

FROM "NEW ENGLAND'S CRISIS"

Not ink, but bloud and tears now serve the turn
To draw the figure of New England's urne.
New England's hour of passion is at hand;
No power except divine can it withstand.
Scarce hath her glass of fifty years run out,
But her old prosperous steeds turn heads about,
Tracking themselves back to their poor beginnings,
To fear and fare upon their fruits of sinnings.
So that the mirror of the Christian world
Lyes burnt to heaps in part, her streamers furl'd.
Grief sighs, joys flee, and dismal fears surprize
Not-dastard spirits only, but the wise.
Thus have the fairest hopes deceiv'd the eye
Of the big-swoln expectant standing by:
Thus the proud ship after a little turn,
Sinks into NEPTUNE's arms to find its urne:
Thus hath the heir to many thousands born
Been in an instant from the mother torn:
Even thus thine infant cheeks begin to pale,
And thy supporters through great losses fail.
This is the *Prologue* to thy future woe,
The *Epilogue* no mortal yet can know.

THOMAS GODFREY (1736-1763)

(*Verses occasioned by a young lady's asking the author*)

WHAT WAS A CURE FOR LOVE?

From me, my Dear, O seek not to receive
What e'en deep-read Experience cannot give.
We may, indeed, from the Physician's skill
Some Med'cine find to cure the body's ill.

But who e'er found the physic for the soul,
Or made th' affections bend to his controul?
When thro' the blaze of passion objects show
How dark's the shade! how bright the colours glow!
All the rous'd soul with transports overcome,
And the mind's surly Monitor is dumb.

In vain the sages turn their volumes o'er,
And on the musty page incessant pore,
Still mighty Love triumphant rules the heart,
Baffles their labour, and eludes their art.

Say what is science, what is reason's force
To stop the passions' wild ungovern'd course?
Reason, 'tis true, may point the rocky shore,
And shew the danger, but can serve no more,
From wave to wave the wretched wreck is tost,
And reason's in th' impetuous torrent lost.

In vain we strive, when urg'd by cold neglect,
By various means our freedom to effect,
Tho' like the bee from sweet to sweet we rove,
And search for ease in the vast round of Love,
Tho' in each Nymph we meet a kind return,
Still in the firstfond hopeless flame we burn,
That dear idea still our thoughts employs,
And blest variety itself e'en cloys.
So exiles banish'd from their native home
Are met with pity wheresoe'er they come,
Yet still their native soil employs their care,
And death were ease to lay their ashes there.

PHILIP FRENEAU (1752-1832)

THE WILD HONEYSUCKLE

Fair flower, that dost so comely grow,
  Hid in this silent, dull retreat,
Untouched thy honied blossoms blow,
  Unseen thy little branches greet:
    No roving foot shall crush thee here,
    No busy hand provoke a tear.

By Nature's self in white arrayed,
  She bade thee shun the vulgar eye,
And planted here the guardian shade,
  And sent soft waters murmuring by;
    Thus quietly thy summer goes,
    Thy days declining to repose.

Smit with those charms, that must decay,
  I grieve to see your future doom;
They died—nor were those flowers more gay,
  The flowers that did in Eden bloom;
    Unpitying frosts and Autumn's power
    Shall leave no vestige of this flower.

From morning suns and evening dews
  At first thy little being came;
If nothing once, you nothing lose,
  For when you die you are the same;
    The space between is but an hour,
    The frail duration of a flower.

THE INDIAN BURYING-GROUND

In spite of all the learned have said,
  I still my old opinion keep;
The posture that we give the dead
  Points out the soul's eternal sleep.

Not so the ancients of these lands;—
The Indian, when from life released,
Again is seated with his friends,
And shares again the joyous feast.

His imaged birds, and painted bowl,
And venison, for a journey dressed,
Bespeak the nature of the soul,
Activity, that wants no rest.

His bow for action ready bent,
And arrows with a head of stone,
Can only mean that life is spent,
And not the old ideas gone.

Thou, stranger, that shalt come this way,
No fraud upon the dead commit,—
Observe the swelling turf, and say,
They do not lie, but here they sit.

Here still a lofty rock remains,
On which the curious eye may trace
(Now wasted half by wearing rains)
The fancies of a ruder race.

Here still an aged elm aspires,
Beneath whose far projecting shade
(And which the shepherd still admires)
The children of the forest played.

There oft a restless Indian queen
(Pale Shebah with her braided hair),
And many a barbarous form is seen
To chide the man that lingers there.

By midnight moons, o'er moistening dews,
In habit for the chase arrayed,
The hunter still the deer pursues,
The hunter and the deer—a shade!

And long shall timorous Fancy see
The painted chief, and pointed spear,
And Reason's self shall bow the knee
To shadows and delusions here.

HUMAN FRAILTY

Disasters on disasters grow,
And those which are not sent we make;
The good we rarely find below,
Or, in the search, the road mistake.

The object of our fancied joys
With eager eye we keep in view:
Possession, when acquired, destroys
The object, and the passion too.

The hat that hid Belinda's hair
Was once the darling of her eye;
'Tis now dismiss'd, she knows not where;
Is laid aside, she knows not why.

Life is to most a nauseous pill,
A treat for which they dearly pay:
Let's take the good, avoid the ill,
Discharge the debt, and walk away.

TIMOTHY DWIGHT (1752-1817)

THE SMOOTH DIVINE

There smiled the smooth Divine, unused to wound
The sinner's heart with hell's alarming sound.
No terrors on his gentle tongue attend;
No grating truths the nicest ear offend.
That strange new-birth, that methodistic grace,
Nor in his heart nor sermons found a place

Plato's fine tales he clumsily retold,
Trite, fireside, moral seesaws, dull as old,—
His Christ and Bible placed at good remove,
Guild hell-deserving, and forgiving love.
'Twas best, he said, mankind should cease to sin:
Good fame required it; so did peace within.
Their honors, well he knew, would ne'er be driven;
But hoped they still would please to go to heaven.
Each week he paid his visitation dues;
Coaxed, jested, laughed; rehearsed the private news;
Smoked with each goody, thought her cheese excelled;
Her pipe he lighted, and her baby held.
Or placed in some great town, with lacquered shoes,
Trim wig, and trimmer gown, and glistening hose,
He bowed, talked politics, learned manners mild,
Most meekly questioned, and most smoothly smiled;
At rich men's jests laughed loud, their stories praised,
Their wives' new patterns gazed, and gazed, and gazed;
Most daintily on pampered turkeys dined,
Nor shrunk with fasting, nor with study pined:
Yet from their churches saw his brethren driven,
Who thundered truth, and spoke the voice of heaven,
Chilled trembling guilt in Satan's headlong path,
Charmed the feet back, and roused the ear of death.
"Let fools," he cried, "starve on, while prudent I
Snug in my nest shall live, and snug shall die."

JOHN TRUMBULL (1750-1831)

THE COUNTRY CLOWN

Bred in distant woods, the clown
Brings all his country airs to town;
The odd address, with awkward grace,
That bows with all-averted face;
The half-heard compliments, whose note
Is swallow'd in the trembling throat;

The stiffen'd gait, the drawling tone,
By which his native place is known;
The blush, that looks, by vast degrees,
Too much like modesty to please;
The proud displays of awkward dress,
That all the country fop express:
The suit right gay, though much belated,
Whose fashion's superannuated;
The watch, depending far in state,
Whose iron chain might form a grate;
The silver buckle, dread to view,
O'ershadowing all the clumsy shoe;
The white-gloved hand, that tries to peep
From ruffle, full five inches deep;
With fifty odd affairs beside,
The foppishness of country pride.
  Poor Dick! though first thy airs provoke
The obstreperous laugh and scornful joke
Doom'd all the ridicule to stand,
While each gay dunce shall lend a hand;
Yet let not scorn dismay thy hope
To shine a witling and a fop.
Blest impudence the prize shall gain,
And bid thee sigh no more in vain.
Thy varied dress shall quickly show
At once the spendthrift and the beau.
With pert address and noisy tongue,
That scorns the fear of prating wrong
'Mongst listening coxcombs shalt thou shine,
And every voice shall echo thine.

JOEL BARLOW (1755-1812)

TO FREEDOM

Sun of the moral world; effulgent source
Of man's best wisdom and his steadiest force,

Soul-searching Freedom! here assume thy stand,
And radiate hence to every distant land;
Point out and prove how all the scenes of strife,
The shock of states, the impassion'd broils of life,
Spring from unequal sway; and how they fly
Before the splendour of thy peaceful eye;
Unfold at last the genuine social plan,
The mind's full scope, the dignity of man,
Bold nature bursting through her long disguise,
And nations daring to be just and wise.
Yes! righteous Freedom, heaven and earth and sea
Yield or withhold their various gifts for thee;
Protected Industry beneath thy reign
Leads all the virtues in her filial train;
Courageous Probity, with brow serene,
And Temperance calm presents her placid mien;
Contentment, Moderation, Labour, Art,
Mould the new man and humanize his heart;
To public plenty private ease dilates,
Domestic peace to harmony of states.
Protected Industry, careering far,
Detects the cause and cures the rage of war,
And sweeps, with forceful arm, to their last graves,
Kings from the earth and pirates from the waves.

DAVID HUMPHREYS (1753-1818)

WESTERN EMIGRATION

With all that's ours, together let us rise,
Seek brighter plains, and more indulgent skies;
Where fair Ohio rolls his amber tide,
And nature blossoms in her virgin pride;
Where all that Beauty's hand can form to please
Shall crown the toils of war with rural ease.
The shady coverts and the sunny hills,
The gentle lapse of ever-murmuring rills,

The soft repose amid the noontide bowers,
The evening walk among the blushing flowers,
The fragrant groves, that yield a sweet perfume,
And vernal glories in perpetual bloom
Await you there; and heaven shall bless the toil:
Your own the produce, and your own the soil.
  There, free from envy, cankering care and strife,
Flow the calm pleasures of domestic life;
There mutual friendship soothes each placid breast:
Blest in themselves, and in each other blest.
From house to house the social glee extends,
For friends in war in peace are doubly friends.
  There cities rise, and spiry towns increase,
With gilded domes and every art of peace.
There Cultivation shall extend his power,
Rear the green blade, and nurse the tender flower;
Make the fair villa in full splendours smile,
And robe with verdure all the genial soil.
There shall rich Commerce court the favouring gales,
And wondering wilds admire the passing sails,
Where the bold ships the stormy Huron brave,
Where wild Ontario rolls the whitening wave,
Where fair Ohio his pure current pours,
And Mississippi laves the extended shores.
And thou Supreme! whose hand sustains this ball,
Before whose nod the nations rise and fall,
Propitious smile, and shed diviner charms
On this blest land, the queen of arts and arms;
Make the great empire rise on wisdom's plan,
The seat of bliss, and last retreat of man.

WASHINGTON ALLSTON (1779-1843)

TO BENJAMIN WEST

From one unused in pomp of words to raise
A courtly monument of empty praise,

Where self, transpiring through the flimsy pile,
Betrays the builder's ostentatious guile,
Accept, O West, these unaffected lays,
Which genius claims and grateful justice pays.
Still green in age, thy vigorous powers impart
The youthful freshness of a blameless heart:
For thine, unaided by another's pain,
The wiles of envy, or the sordid train
Of selfishness, has been the manly race
Of one who felt the purifying grace
Of honest fame; nor found the effort vain,
E'en for itself to love thy soul-ennobling art.

JOHN PIERPONT (1785-1866)

THE SPARKLING BOWL

Thou sparkling bowl! thou sparkling bowl!
  Though lips of bards thy brim may press,
And eyes of beauty o'er thee roll,
  And song and dance thy power confess,
I will not touch thee; for there clings
A scorpion to thy side, that stings!

Thou crystal glass! like Eden's tree,
  Thy melted ruby tempts the eye,
And, as from that, there comes from thee
  The voice, "Thou shalt not surely die."
I dare not lift thy liquid gem;—
A snake is twisted round thy stem!

Thou liquid fire! like that which glow'd
  On Melita's surf-beaten shore,
Thou'st been upon my guests bestow'd,
  But thou shalt warm my house no more.
For, wheresoe'er thy radiance falls,
Forth, from thy heat, a viper crawls!

John Pierpont

What, though of gold the goblet be,
  Emboss'd with branches of the vine,
Beneath whose burnish'd leaves we see
  Such clusters as pour'd out the wine?
Among those leaves an adder hangs!
I fear him;—for I've felt his fangs.

The Hebrew, who the desert trod,
  And felt the fiery serpent's bite,
Look'd up to that ordain'd of GOD,
  And found that life was in the sight.
So, the *worm*-bitten's fiery veins
Cool, when he drinks what GOD ordains.

Ye gracious clouds! ye deep, cold wells!
  Ye gems, from mossy rocks that drip!
Springs, that from earth's mysterious cells
  Gush o'er your granite basin's lip!
To you I look;—your largess give,
And I will drink of you, and live.

RICHARD HENRY DANA (1787-1879)

THE LITTLE BEACH-BIRD

Thou little bird, thou dweller by the sea,
  Why takest thou its melancholy voice,
    And with that boding cry
    Why o'er the waves dost fly?
O, rather, bird, with me
  Through the fair land rejoice!

Thy flitting form comes ghostly dim and pale,
  As driven by a beating storm at sea;
    Thy cry is weak and scared,
    As if thy mates had shared
The doom of us: Thy wail,—
  What doth it bring to me?

Thou call'st along the sand, and haunt'st the surge,
Restless and sad; as if, in strange accord
With the motion and the roar
Of waves that drive to shore,
One spirit did ye urge—
The Mystery—the Word.

Of thousands, thou, both sepulchre and pall,
Old Ocean! A requiem o'er the dead
From out thy gloomy cells
A tale of mourning tells,—
Tells of man's woe and fall,
His sinless glory fled.

Then turn thee, little bird, and take thy flight
Where the complaining sea shall sadness bring
Thy spirit never more;
Come, quit with me the shore,
And on the meadows light
Where birds for gladness sing!

RICHARD HENRY WILDE (1789-1847)

TO THE MOCKING-BIRD

Who shall thy gay buffoonery describe?
Winged mimic of the woods! thou motley fool!
Thine ever ready notes of ridicule
Pursue thy fellows still with jest and gibe.
Wit, sophist, songster, Yorick of thy tribe,
Thou sportive satirist of Nature's school,
To thee the palm of scoffing we ascribe,
Arch-mocker and mad Abbot of Misrule!
For such thou art by day—but all night long
Thou pourest a soft, sweet, pensive, solemn strain,
As if thou didst in this thy moonlight song
Like to the melancholy Jacques complain,
Musing on falsehood, folly, vice, and wrong,
And sighing for thy motley coat again.

Lydia Huntley Sigourney

LYDIA HUNTLEY SIGOURNEY
(1791-1865)

THE ALPINE FLOWERS

Meek dwellers mid yon terror-stricken cliffs!
With brows so pure, and incense-breathing lips,
Whence are ye?— Did some white-winged messenger
On mercy's missions trust your timid germ
To the cold cradle of eternal snows?
Or, breathing on the callous icicles,
Bid them with tear-drops nurse ye?—
—Tree nor shrub
Dare that drear atmosphere; no polar pine
Uprears a veteran front; yet there ye stand,
Leaning your cheeks against the thick-ribb'd ice,
And looking up with brilliant eyes to Him
Who bids you bloom unblanch'd amid the waste
Of desolation. Man, who, panting, toils
O'er slippery steeps, or, trembling, treads the verge
Of yawning gulfs, o'er which the headlong plunge
Is to eternity, looks shuddering up,
And marks ye in your placid loveliness—
Fearless, yet frail—and, clasping his chill hands,
Blesses your pencill'd beauty. Mid the pomp
Of mountain summits rushing on the sky,
And chaining the rapt soul in breathless awe,
He bows to bind you drooping to his breast,
Inhales your spirit from the frost-wing'd gale,
And freer dreams of heaven.

CARLOS WILCOX (1794-1827)

SIGHTS AND SOUNDS OF THE NIGHT

Ere long the clouds were gone, the moon was set;
When deeply blue without a shade of gray,
The sky was fill'd with stars that almost met,
Their points prolong'd and sharpen'd to one ray;
Through their transparent air the milky-way
Seem'd one broad flame of pure resplendent white,
As if some globe on fire, turn'd far astray,
Had cross'd the wide arch with so swift a flight,
That for a moment shone its whole long track of light.

At length in northern skies, at first but small,
A sheet of light meteorous begun
To spread on either hand, and rise and fall
In waves, that slowly first, then quickly run
Along its edge, set thick but one by one
With spiry beams, that all at once shot high,
Like those through vapours from the setting sun;
Then sidelong as before the wind they fly,
Like streaking rain from clouds that flit along the sky.

Now all the mountain-tops and gulfs between
Seem'd one dark plain; from forests, caves profound,
And rushing waters far below unseen,
Rose a deep roar in one united sound,
Alike pervading all the air around,
And seeming e'en the azure dome to fill,
And from it through soft ether to resound
In low vibrations, sending a sweet thrill
To every finger's end from rapture deep and still.

JOSEPH RODMAN DRAKE (1795-1820)

BRONX

I sat me down upon a green bank-side,
  Skirting the smooth edge of a gentle river,
Whose waters seem'd unwillingly to glide,
  Like parting friends, who linger while they sever;
Enforced to go, yet seeming still unready,
Backward they wind their way in many a wistful eddy.

Gray o'er my head the yellow-vested willow
  Ruffled its hoary top in the fresh breezes,
Glancing in light, like spray on a green billow,
  Or the fine frostwork which young winter freezes;
When first his power in infant pastime trying,
Congeals sad autumn's tears on the dead branches lying.

From rocks around hung the loose ivy dangling,
  And in the clefts sumach of liveliest green,
Bright ising-stars the little beech was spangling,
  The gold-cup sorrel from his gauzy screen
Shone like a fairy crown, enchased and beaded,
Left on some morn, when light flash'd in their eyes unheeded.

The humbird shook his sun-touch'd wings around,
  The bluefinch caroll'd in the still retreat;
The antic squirrel caper'd on the ground
  Where lichens made a carpet for his feet;
Through the transparent waves, the ruddy minkle
Shot up in glimmering sparks his red fin's tiny twinkle.

There were dark cedars, with loose, mossy tresses,
  White-powder'd dog trees, and stiff hollies flaunting
Gaudy as rustics in their May-day dresses,
  Blue pelloret from purple leaves upslanting
A modest gaze, like eyes of a young maiden
Shining beneath dropp'd lids the evening of her wedding.

The breeze fresh springing from the lips of morn,
  Kissing the leaves, and sighing so to lose 'em,
The winding of the merry locust's horn,
  The glad spring gushing from the rock's bare bosom:
Sweet sights, sweet sounds, all sights, all sounds excelling,
O! 'twas a ravishing spot, form'd for a poet's dwelling.

And did I leave thy loveliness, to stand
  Again in the dull world of earthly blindness?
Pain'd with the pressure of unfriendly hands,
  Sick of smooth looks, agued with icy kindness?
Left I for this thy shades, where none intrude,
To prison wandering thought and mar sweet solitude?

Yet I will look upon thy face again,
  My own romantic Bronx, and it will be
A face more pleasant than the face of men.
  Thy waves are old companions, I shall see
A well-remember'd form in each old tree,
And hear a voice long lived in thy wild minstrelsy.

FITZ-GREENE HALLECK (1790-1867)

ON THE DEATH OF JOSEPH RODMAN DRAKE

Green be the turf above thee,
  Friend of my better days!
None knew thee but to love thee,
  Nor named thee but to praise.

Tears fell when thou wert dying,
  From eyes unused to weep,
And long, where thou art lying,
  Will tears the cold turf steep.

When hearts, whose truth was proven,
  Like thine, are laid in earth,
There should a wreath be woven
  To tell the world their worth;

And I who woke each morrow
To clasp thy hand in mine,
Who shared thy joy and sorrow,
Whose weal and woe were thine;

It should be mine to braid it
Around thy faded brow,
But I've in vain essayed it,
And feel I cannot now.

While memory bids me weep thee,
Nor thoughts nor words are free,—
The grief is fixed too deeply
That mourns a man like thee.

PART TWO

WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT
(1794-1878)

THANATOPSIS

To him who in the love of Nature holds
Communion with her visible forms, she speaks
A various language; for his gayer hours
She has a voice of gladness, and a smile
And eloquence of beauty, and she glides
Into his darker musings, with a mild
And healing sympathy, that steals away
Their sharpness, ere he is aware. When thoughts
Of the last bitter hour come like a blight
Over thy spirit, and sad images
Of the stern agony, and shroud, and pall,
And breathless darkness, and the narrow house,
Make thee to shudder and grow sick at heart;—
Go forth, under the open sky, and list
To Nature's teachings, while from all around—
Earth and her waters, and the depths of air—
Comes a still voice:—

Yet a few days, and thee
The all-beholding sun shall see no more
In all his course; nor yet in the cold ground,
Where thy pale form was laid with many tears,
Nor in the embrace of ocean, shall exist
Thy image. Earth, that nourished thee, shall claim
Thy growth, to be resolved to earth again,
And, lost each human trace, surrendering up
Thine individual being, shalt thou go
To mix forever with the elements,

To be a brother to the insensible rock
And to the sluggish clod, which the rude swain
Turns with his share, and treads upon. The oak
Shall send his roots abroad, and pierce thy mould.

Yet not to thine eternal resting-place
Shalt thou retire alone, nor couldst thou wish
Couch more magnificent. Thou shalt lie down
With patriarchs of the infant world—with kings,
The powerful of the earth—the wise, the good,
Fair forms, and hoary seers of ages past,
All in one mighty sepulchre. The hills
Rock-ribbed and ancient as the sun,—the vales
Stretching in pensive quietness between;
The venerable woods—rivers that move
In majesty, and the complaining brooks
That make the meadows green; and, poured round all,
Old Ocean's gray and melancholy waste,—
Are but the solemn decorations all
Of the great tomb of man. The golden sun,
The planets, all the infinite host of heaven,
Are shining on the sad abodes of death
Through the still lapse of ages. All that tread
The globe are but a handful to the tribes
That slumber in its bosom.— Take the wings
Of morning, pierce the Barcan wilderness,
Or lose thyself in the continuous woods
Where rolls the Oregon, and hears no sound,
Save his own dashings—yet the dead are there;
And millions in those solitudes, since first
The flight of years began, have laid them down
In their last sleep—the dead reign there alone.
So shalt thou rest, and what if thou withdraw
In silence from the living, and no friend
Take note of thy departure? All that breathe
Will share thy destiny. The gay will laugh
When thou art gone, the solemn brood of care

Plod on, and each one as before will chase
His favorite phantom; yet all these shall leave
Their mirth and their employments, and shall come
And make their bed with thee. As the long train
Of ages glides away, the sons of men—
The youth in life's fresh spring, and he who goes
In the full strength of years, matron and maid,
The speechless babe, and the gray-headed man—
Shall one by one be gathered to thy side,
By those, who in their turn shall follow them.

So live, that when thy summons comes to join
The innumerable caravan, which moves
To that mysterious realm, where each shall take
His chamber in the silent halls of death,
Thou go not, like the quarry-slave at night,
Scourged to his dungeon, but, sustained and soothed
By an unfaltering trust, approach thy grave
Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch
About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams.

TO A WATERFOWL

Whither, midst falling dew,
While glow the heavens with the last steps of day,
Far, through their rosy depths, dost thou pursue
Thy solitary way?

Vainly the fowler's eye
Might mark thy distant flight to do thee wrong,
As, darkly painted on the crimson sky,
Thy figure floats along.

Seek'st thou the plashy brink
Of weedy lake, or marge of river wide,
Or where the rocking billows rise and sink
On the chafed ocean side?

There is a Power whose care
Teaches thy way along that pathless coast—
The desert and illimitable air—
Lone wandering, but not lost.

All day thy wings have fanned,
At that far height, the cold, thin atmosphere,
Yet stoop not, weary, to the welcome land,
Though the dark night is near.

And soon that toil shall end;
Soon shalt thou find a summer home, and rest,
And scream among thy fellows; reeds shall bend,
Soon, o'er thy sheltered nest.

Thou'rt gone! the abyss of heaven
Hath swallowed up thy form; yet on my heart
Deeply hath sunk the lesson thou hast given,
And shall not soon depart.

He, who, from zone to zone,
Guides through the boundless sky thy certain flight,
In the long way that I must tread alone
Will lead my steps aright.

THE DEATH OF THE FLOWERS

The melancholy days are come, the saddest of the year,
Of wailing winds, and naked woods, and meadows brown and sere.
Heaped in the hollows of the grove, the autumn leaves lie dead;
They rustle to the eddying gust, and to the rabbit's tread.
The robin and the wren are flown, and from the shrubs the jay,
And from the wood-top calls the crow through all the gloomy day.

Where are the flowers, the fair young flowers, that lately sprang and stood
In brighter light and softer airs, a beauteous sisterhood?

Alas! they all are in their graves, the gentle race of flowers
Are lying in their lowly beds, with the fair and good of ours.
The rain is falling where they lie, but the cold November rain
Calls not from out the gloomy earth the lovely ones again.

The wind-flower and the violet, they perished long ago,
And the brier-rose and the orchis died amid the summer glow;
But on the hill the golden-rod, and the aster in the wood,
And the yellow sun-flower by the brook, in autumn beauty stood,
Till fell the frost from the clear cold heaven, as falls the plague on men,
And the brightness of their smile was gone, from upland, glade, and glen.

And now, when comes the calm mild day, as still such days will come,
To call the squirrel and the bee from out their winter home;
When the sound of dropping nuts is heard, though all the trees are still,
And twinkle in the smoky light the waters of the rill,
The south wind searches for the flowers whose fragrance late he bore,
And sighs to find them in the wood and by the stream no more.

And then I think of one who in her youthful beauty died,
The fair meek blossom that grew up and faded by my side.
In the cold moist earth we laid her, when the forest cast the leaf,
And we wept that one so lovely should have a life so brief:
Yet not unmeet it was that one like that young friend of ours,
So gentle and so beautiful, should perish with the flowers.

TO THE FRINGED GENTIAN

Thou blossom bright with autumn dew,
And colored with the heaven's own blue,
That openest when the quiet light
Succeeds the keen and frosty night,

Thou comest not when violets lean
O'er wandering brooks and springs unseen,
Or columbines, in purple dressed,
Nod o'er the ground-bird's hidden nest.

Thou waitest late and com'st alone,
When woods are bare and birds are flown,
And frost and shortening days portend
The aged year is near his end.

Then doth thy sweet and quiet eye
Look through its fringes to the sky,
Blue—blue—as if that sky let fall
A flower from its cerulean wall.

I would that thus, when I shall see
The hour of death draw near to me,
Hope, blossoming within my heart,
May look to heaven as I depart.

O FAIREST OF THE RURAL MAIDS

O fairest of the rural maids!
Thy birth was in the forest shades;
Green boughs, and glimpses of the sky,
Were all that met thine infant eye.

Thy sports, thy wanderings, when a child,
Were ever in the sylvan wild;
And all the beauty of the place
Is in thy heart and on thy face.

The twilight of the trees and rocks
Is in the light shade of thy locks;
Thy step is as the wind, that weaves
Its playful way among the leaves.

Thine eyes are springs, in whose serene
And silent waters heaven is seen;
Their lashes are the herbs that look
On their young figures in the brook.

The forest depths, by foot unprest,
Are not more sinless than thy breast;
The holy peace, that fills the air
Of those calm solitudes, is there.

THE PRAIRIES

These are the gardens of the desert, these
The unshorn fields, boundless and beautiful,
For which the speech of England has no name—
The prairies. I behold them for the first,
And my heart swells, while the dilated sight
Takes in the encircling vastness. Lo! they stretch
In airy undulations, far away,
As if the ocean, in his gentlest swell,
Stood still, with all his rounded billows fix'd,
And motionless forever.—Motionless?—
No—they are all unchain'd again. The clouds
Sweep over with their shadows, and, beneath,
The surface rolls and fluctuates to the eye;
Dark hollows seem to glide along and chase
The sunny ridges. Breezes of the south!
Who toss the golden and the flame-like flowers,
And pass the prairie-hawk that, poised on high,
Flaps his broad wings, yet moves not—ye have play'd
Among the palms of Mexico and vines
Of Texas, and have crisp'd the limpid brooks
That from the fountains of Sonora glide
Into the calm Pacific—have ye fann'd
A nobler or a lovelier scene than this?
Man hath no part in all this glorious work:
The hand that built the firmament hath heaved

And smoothed these verdant swells, and sown their slopes
With herbage, planted them with island groves,
And hedged them round with forests. Fitting floor
For this magnificent temple of the sky—
With flowers whose glory and whose multitude
Rival the constellations! The great heavens
Seem to stoop down upon the scene in love,—
A nearer vault, and of a tenderer blue,
Than that which bends above the eastern hills.
As o'er the verdant waste I guide my steed,
Among the high, rank grass that sweeps his sides,
The hollow beating of his footstep seems
A sacrilegious sound. I think of those
Upon whose rest he tramples. Are they here—
The dead of other days?—and did the dust
Of these fair solitudes once stir with life
And burn with passion? Let the mighty mounds
That overlook the rivers, or that rise
In the dim forest, crowded with old oaks,
Answer. A race, that long has pass'd away,
Built them;—a disciplined and populous race
Heap'd, with long toil, the earth, while yet the Greek
Was hewing the Pentelicus to forms
Of symmetry, and rearing on its rock
The glittering Parthenon. These ample fields
Nourish'd their harvests; here their herds were fed,
When haply by their stalls the bison low'd
And bow'd his maned shoulder to the yoke.
All day this desert murmur'd with their toils,
Till twilight blush'd, and lovers walk'd, and woo'd
In a forgotten language, and old tunes,
From instruments of unremember'd form,
Gave the soft winds a voice. The red man came—
The roaming hunter-tribes, warlike and fierce,
And the mound-builders vanish'd from the earth.
The solitude of centuries untold
Has settled where they dwelt. The prairie-wolf

Hunts in their meadows, and his fresh-dug den
Yawns by my path. The gopher mines the ground
Where stood their swarming cities. All is gone—
All—save the piles of earth that hold their bones—
The platforms where they worshipp'd unknown gods—
The barriers which they builded from the soil
To keep the foe at bay—till o'er the walls
The wild beleaguerers broke, and, one by one,
The strongholds of the plain were forced, and heap'd
With corpses. The brown vultures of the wood
Flock'd to those vast, uncover'd sepulchres,
And sat, unscared and silent, at their feast.
Haply some solitary fugitive,
Lurking in marsh and forest, till the sense
Of desolation and of fear became
Bitterer than death, yielded himself to die.
Man's better nature triumph'd. Kindly words
Welcomed and soothed him; the rude conquerors
Seated the captive with their chiefs; he chose
A bride among their maidens, and at length
Seem'd to forget,—yet ne'er forgot,—the wife
Of his first love, and her sweet little ones
Butcher'd, amid their shrieks, with all his race.
  Thus change the forms of being. Thus arise
Races of living things, glorious in strength,
And perish, as the quickening breath of God
Fills them, or is withdrawn. The red man, too—
Has left the blooming wilds he ranged so long,
And, nearer to the Rocky Mountains, sought
A wider hunting-ground. The beaver builds
No longer by these streams, but far away,
On waters whose blue surface ne'er gave back
The white man's face—among Missouri's spring,
And pools whose issues swell the Oregon,
He rears his little Venice. In these plains
The bison feeds no more. Twice twenty leagues

Beyond remotest smoke of hunter's camp,
Roams the majestic brute, in herds that shake
The earth with thundering steps—yet here I meet
His ancient footprints stamp'd beside the pool.
Still this great solitude is quick with life.
Myriads of insects, gaudy as the flowers
They flutter over, gentle quadrupeds,
And birds, that scarce have learn'd the fear of man,
Are here, and sliding reptiles of the ground,
Startlingly beautiful. The graceful deer
Bounds to the wood at my approach. The bee,
A more adventurous colonist than man,
With whom he came across the eastern deep,
Fills the savannas with his murmurings,
And hides his sweets, as in the golden age,
Within the hollow oak. I listen long
To his domestic hum, and think I hear
The sound of that advancing multitude
Which soon shall fill these deserts. From the ground
Comes up the laugh of children, the soft voice
Of maidens, and the sweet and solemn hymn
Of Sabbath worshippers. The low of herds
Blends with the rustling of the heavy grain
Over the dark-brown furrows. All at once
A fresher wind sweeps by, and breaks my dream,
And I am in the wilderness alone.

JAMES GATES PERCIVAL (1795-1856)

THE CORAL GROVE

Deep in the wave is a coral grove,
Where the purple mullet and gold-fish rove,
Where the sea-flower spreads its leaves of blue,
That never are wet with falling dew,
But in bright and changeful beauty shine,
Far down in the green and glassy brine.

The floor is of sand like the mountain drift
And the pearl-shells spangle the flinty snow;
From coral rocks the sea-plants lift
Their boughs, where the tides and billows flow;
The water is calm and still below,
For the winds and waves are absent there,
And the sands are bright as the stars that glow
In the motionless fields of upper air:
There with its waving blade of green,
The sea-flag streams through the silent water,
And the crimson leaf of the dulse is seen
To blush, like a banner bathed in slaughter:
There with a light and easy motion,
The fan-coral sweeps through the clear, deep sea;
And the yellow and scarlet tufts of ocean
Are bending like corn on the upland lea:
And life, in rare and beautiful forms,
Is sporting amid those bowers of stone,
And is safe, when the wrathful spirit of storms
Has made the top of the wave his own:
And when the ship from his fury flies,
Where the myriad voices of ocean roar,
When the wind-god frowns in the murky skies,
And demons are waiting the wreck on shore;
Then far below, in the peaceful sea,
The purple mullet and gold-fish rove,
Where the waters murmur tranquilly,
Through the bending twigs of the coral grove.

MARIA GOWEN BROOKS (1795-1845)

SONG OF EGLA

Day in melting purple dying,
Blossoms all around me sighing,
Fragrance from the lilies straying,
Zephyr with my ringlets playing,

Ye but waken my distress:
I am sick of loneliness.

Thou to whom I love to hearken,
Come ere night around me darken:
Though thy softness but deceive me,
Say thou'rt true, and I'll believe thee.
Veil, if ill, thy soul's intent:
Let me think it innocent!

Save thy toiling, spare thy treasure:
All I ask is friendship's pleasure:
Let the shining ore lie darkling;
Bring no gem in lustre sparkling;
Gifts and gold are nought to me:
I would only look on thee;

Tell to thee the high-wrought feeling,
Ecstasy but in revealing;
Paint to thee the deep sensation,
Rapture in participation,
Yet but torture, if comprest
In a lone unfriended breast.

Absent still? Ah, come and bless me!
Let these eyes again caress thee.
Once, in caution, I could fly thee.
Now I nothing could deny thee.
In a look if death there be,
Come, and I will gaze on thee!

JOHN G. C. BRAINARD (1796-1828)

STANZAS

The dead leaves strew the forest walk,
And wither'd are the pale wild flowers;
The frost hangs blackening on the stalk,
The dew-drops fall in frozen showers.

Gone are the spring's green sprouting bowers,
Gone summer's rich and mantling vines,
And autumn, with her yellow hours,
On hill and plain no longer shines.

I learn'd a clear and wild-toned note,
That rose and swell'd from yonder tree—
A gay bird, with too sweet a throat,
There perch'd, and raised her song for me.
The winter comes, and where is she?
Away—where summer wings will rove,
Where buds are fresh, and every tree
Is vocal with the notes of love.

Too mild the breath of southern sky,
Too fresh the flower that blushes there,
The northern breeze that rustles by
Finds leaves too green, and buds too fair;
No forest tree stands stripp'd and bare,
No stream beneath the ice is dead,
No mountain top, with sleety hair,
Bends o'er the snows its reverend head.

Go there, with all the birds, and seek
A happier clime, with livelier flight,
Kiss, with the sun, the evening's cheek,
And leave me lonely with the night.
I'll gaze upon the cold north light,
And mark where all its glories shone,—
See—that it all is fair and bright,
Feel—that it all is cold and gone.

ALBERT GORTON GREENE (1802-1868)

OLD GRIMES

Old Grimes is dead; that good old man
We never shall see more:
He used to wear a long black coat,
All buttoned down before.

His heart was open as the day,
His feelings all were true;
His hair was some inclined to gray—
He wore it in a queue.

Whene'er he heard the voice of pain,
His breast with pity burned;
The large, round head upon his cane
From ivory was turned.

Kind words he ever had for all;
He knew no base design:
His eyes were dark and rather small,
His nose was aquiline.

He lived at peace with all mankind,
In friendship he was true;
His coat had pocket-holes behind,
His pantaloons were blue.

Unharmed, the sin which earth pollutes
He passed securely o'er,
And never wore a pair of boots
For thirty years or more.

But good old Grimes is now at rest,
Nor fears misfortune's frown:
He wore a double-breasted vest—
The stripes ran up and down.

Albert Gorton Greene

He modest merit sought to find,
  And pay it its desert:
He had no malice in his mind,
  No ruffles on his shirt.

His neighbors he did not abuse—
  Was sociable and gay:
He wore large buckles on his shoes,
  And changed them every day.

His knowledge, hid from public gaze,
  He did not bring to view,
Nor make a noise, town-meeting days,
  As many people do.

His worldly goods he never threw
  In trust to fortune's chances,
But lived (as all his brothers do)
  In easy circumstances.

Thus undisturbed by anxious cares,
  His peaceful moments ran;
And everybody said he was
  A fine old gentleman.

EDWARD COATE PINKNEY (1802-1828)

A HEALTH

I fill this cup to one made up
  Of loveliness alone,
A woman, of her gentle sex
  The seeming paragon;
To whom the better elements
  And kindly stars have given
A form so fair, that, like the air,
  'Tis less of earth than heaven.

Her every tone is music's own,
Like those of morning birds,
And something more than melody
Dwells ever in her words;
The coinage of her heart are they,
And from her lips each flows
As one may see the burdened bee
Forth issue from the rose.

Affections are as thoughts to her,
The measures of her hours;
Her feelings have the fragrancy,
The freshness of young flowers;
And lovely passions, changing oft,
So fill her, she appears
The image of themselves by turns,—
The idol of past years!

Of her bright face one glance will trace
A picture on the brain,
And of her voice in echoing hearts
A sound must long remain;
But memory, such as mine of her,
So very much endears,
When death is nigh my latest sigh
Will not be life's, but hers.

I fill this cup to one made up
Of loveliness alone,
A woman, of her gentle sex
The seeming paragon—
Her health! and would on earth there stood
Some more of such a frame,
That life might be all poetry,
And weariness a name.

WILLIAM GILMORE SIMMS (1806-1870)

THE GRAPE-VINE SWING

Lithe and long as the serpent train,
  Springing and clinging from tree to tree,
Now darting upward, now down again,
  With a twist and a twirl that are strange to see;
Never took serpent a deadlier hold,
  Never the cougar a wilder spring,
Strangling the oak with the boa's fold,
  Spanning the beach with the condor's wing.

Yet no foe that we fear to seek,—
  The boy leaps wild to thy rude embrace;
Thy bulging arms bear as soft a cheek
  As ever on lover's breast found place;
On thy waving train is a playful hold
  Thou shalt never to lighter grasp persuade;
While a maiden sits in thy drooping fold,
  And swings and sings in the noonday shade!

O giant strange of our Southern woods!
  I dream of thee still in the well-known spot,
Though our vessel strains o'er the ocean floods,
  And the Northern forest beholds thee not;
I think of thee still with a sweet regret,
  As the cordage yields to my playful grasp,—
Dost thou spring and cling in our woodlands yet?
  Does the maiden still swing in thy giant clasp?

NATHANIEL PARKER WILLIS
(1806-1867)

UNSEEN SPIRITS

The shadows lay along Broadway,
'Twas near the twilight-tide,
And slowly there a lady fair
Was walking in her pride.
Alone walked she; but viewlessly,
Walked spirits at her side.

Peace charmed the street beneath her feet,
And Honor charmed the air;
And all astir looked kind on her,
And called her good as fair,
For all God ever gave to her
She kept with chary care.

She kept with care her beauties rare
From lovers warm and true,
For her heart was cold to all but gold,
And the rich came not to woo—
But honored well are charms to sell
If priests the selling do.

Now walking there was one more fair—
A slight girl, lily-pale;
And she had unseen company
To make the spirit quail:
'Twixt Want and Scorn she walked forlorn,
And nothing could avail.

No mercy now can clear her brow
For this world's peace to pray;
For, as love's wild prayer dissolved in air,
Her woman's heart gave way!—
But the sin forgiven by Christ in heaven
By man is cursed alway!

THOMAS HOLLEY CHIVERS (1807-1858)

THE VOICE OF THOUGHT

Faint as the far-down tone
  Beneath the sounding sea,
Muffled by its own moan,
  To silent melody;
So faint we cannot tell
  But that the sound we hear
Is some sweet roses' smell
  That falls upon our ear;
(As if the Butterfly,
  Shaking the Lily-bell,
While drinking joyfully,
  Should toll its own death-knell!)
Sweeter than Hope's sweet lute
  Singing of joys to be,
When Pain's harsh voice is mute,
  Is the Soul's sweet song to me.

EDGAR ALLAN POE (1809-1849)

TO HELEN

Helen, thy beauty is to me
  Like those Nicéan barks of yore
That gently, o'er a perfumed sea,
  The weary, wayworn wanderer bore
  To his own native shore.

On desperate seas long wont to roam,
  Thy hyacinth hair, thy classic face,
Thy Naiad airs have brought me home
  To the glory that was Greece,
And the grandeur that was Rome.

Lo! in yon brilliant window niche
  How statue like I see thee stand,
  The agate lamp within thy hand!
Ah, Psyche, from the regions which
  Are Holy Land!

ISRAFEL

In Heaven a spirit doth dwell
  "Whose heart-strings are a lute";
None sing so wildly well
As the angel Israfel,
And the giddy stars (so legends tell),
Ceasing their hymns, attend the spell
  Of his voice, all mute.

Tottering above
  In her highest noon,
  The enamoured moon
Blushes with love,
  While, to listen, the red levin
  (With the rapid Pleiads, even,
  Which were seven),
  Pauses in heaven.

And they say (the starry choir
  And the other listening things)
That Israfeli's fire
Is owing to that lyre
  By which he sits and sings—
The trembling living wire
  Of those unusual strings.

But the skies that angel trod,
  Where deep thoughts are a duty—
Where Love's a grown-up God—
  Where the Houri glances are
  Imbued with all the beauty
  Which we worship in a star.

Therefore, thou art not wrong,
  Israfeli, who despisest
An unimpassioned song;
To thee the laurels belong,
  Best bard, because the wisest!
Merrily live and long!

The ecstasies above
  With thy burning measures suit—
Thy grief, thy joy, thy hate, thy love,
  With the fervour of thy lute—
  Well may the stars be mute!

Yes, Heaven is thine; but this
  Is a world of sweets and sours;
  Our flowers are merely—flowers,
And the shadow of thy perfect bliss
  Is the sunshine of ours.

If I could dwell
Where Israfel
  Hath dwelt, and he where I,
He might not sing so wildly well
  A mortal melody,
While a bolder note than this might swell
  From my lyre within the sky.

THE CITY IN THE SEA

Lo! Death has reared himself a throne
In a strange city lying alone
Far down within the dim West,
Where the good and the bad and the worst and the best,
Have gone to their eternal rest.
Their shrines and palaces and towers
(Time-eaten towers that tremble not!)
Resemble nothing that is ours.
Around, by lifting winds forgot,

Resignedly beneath the sky
The melancholy waters lie.
No rays from the holy heaven come down
On the long night-time of that town;
But light from out the lurid sea
Streams up the turrets silently—
Gleams up the pinnacles far and free—
Up domes—up spires—up kingly halls—
Up fanes—up Babylon-like walls—
Up shadowy long-forgotten bowers
Of sculptured ivy and stone flowers—
Up many and many a marvellous shrine
Whose wreathéd friezes intertwine
The viol, the violet, and the vine.

Resignedly beneath the sky
The melancholy waters lie,
So blend the turrets and shadows there
That all seem pendulous in air,
While from a proud tower in the town
Death looks gigantically down.

There open fanes and gaping graves
Yawn level with the luminous waves;
But not the riches there that lie
In each idol's diamond eye—
Not the gaily-jewelled dead
Tempt the waters from their bed;
For no ripples curl, alas!
Along that wilderness of glass—
No swellings tell that winds may be
Upon some far-off happier sea—
No heavings hint that winds have been
On seas less hideously serene.

But lo, a stir is in the air!
The wave—there is a movement there!

As if the towers had thrust aside,
In slightly sinking, the dull tide—
As if their tops had feebly given
A void within the filmy Heaven.
The waves have now a redder glow—
The hours are breathing faint and low—
And when, amid no earthly moans,
  Down, down that town shall settle hence,
Hell, rising from a thousand thrones,
  Shall do it reverence.

SONNET TO SCIENCE

Science! true daughter of Old Time thou art!
  Who alterest all things with thy peering eyes.
Why preyest thou thus upon the poet's heart,
  Vulture, whose wings are dull realities?
How should he love thee? or how deem thee wise,
  Who wouldst not leave him in his wandering
To seek for treasure in the jewelled skies,
  Albeit he soared with an undaunted wing?
Hast thou not dragged Diana from her car?
  And driven the Hamadryad from the wood
To seek a shelter in some happier star?
  Hast thou not torn the Naiad from her flood,
The Elfin from the green grass, and from me
  The summer dream beneath the tamarind tree?

TO MY MOTHER

Because I feel that, in the Heavens above,
  The angels, whispering to one another,
Can find, among their burning terms of love,
  None so devotional as that of "Mother,"
Therefore by that dear name I long have called you—
  You who are more than mother unto me,
And fill my heart of hearts, where Death installed you,
  In setting my Virginia's spirit free.

My mother—my own mother, who died early,
Was but the mother of myself; but you
Are mother to the one I loved so dearly,
And thus are dearer than the mother I knew
By that infinity with which my wife
Was dearer to my soul than its soul-life.

ULALUME

The skies they were ashen and sober;
The leaves they were crispéd and sere—
The leaves they were withering and sere;
It was night in the lonesome October
Of my most immemorial year;
It was hard by the dim lake of Auber,
In the misty mid region of Weir—
It was down by the dank tarn of Auber,
In the ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir.

Here once, through an alley Titanic,
Of cypress, I roamed with my Soul—
Of cypress, with Psyche, my Soul.
These were days when my heart was volcanic
As the scoriac rivers that roll—
As the lavas that restlessly roll
Their sulphurous currents down Yaanek
In the ultimate climes of the pole—
That groan as they roll down Mount Yaanek
In the realms of the boreal pole.

Our talk had been serious and sober,
But our thoughts they were palsied and sere—
Our memories were treacherous and sere—
For we knew not the month was October,
And we marked not the night of the year—
(Ah, night of all nights in the year!)

We noted not the dim lake of Auber—
(Though once we had journeyed down here)—
Remembered not the dank tarn of Auber,
Nor the ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir.

And now, as the night was senescent
And star-dials pointed to morn—
As the star-dials hinted of morn—
At the end of our path a liquescent
And nebulous lustre was born,
Out of which a miraculous crescent
Arose with a duplicate horn—
Astarte's bediamonded crescent
Distinct with its duplicate horn.

And I said—"She is warmer than Dian:
She rolls through an ether of sighs—
She revels in a region of sighs:
She has seen that the tears are not dry on
These cheeks, where the worm never dies,
And has come past the stars of the Lion
To point us the path to the skies—
To the Lethean peace of the skies—
Come up, in despite of the Lion,
To shine on us with her bright eyes—
Come up through the lair of the Lion,
With love in her luminous eyes."

But Psyche, uplifting her finger,
Said—"Sadly this star I mistrust—
Her pallor I strangely mistrust:—
Oh, hasten!—oh, let us not linger!
Oh, fly!—let us fly!—for we must."
In terror she spoke, letting sink her
Wings until they trailed in the dust—
In agony sobbed, letting sink her
Plumes till they trailed in the dust—
Till they sorrowfully trailed in the dust.

I replied—"This is nothing but dreaming—
Let us on by this tremulous light!
Let us bathe in this crystalline light!
Its Sibyllic splendour is beaming
With Hope and in Beauty to-night:—
See!—it flickers up the sky through the night!
Ah, we safely may trust to its gleaming,
And be sure it will lead us aright—
We safely may trust to a gleaming
That cannot but guide us aright,
Since it flickers up to Heaven through the night."

Thus I pacified Psyche and kissed her,
And tempted her out of her gloom—
And conquered her scruples and gloom;
And we passed to the end of the vista,
But were stopped by the door of a tomb—
By the door of a legended tomb;
And I said—"What is written, sweet sister,
On the door of this legended tomb?"
She replied—"Ulalume—Ulalume—
'Tis the vault of thy lost Ulalume!"

Then my heart it grew ashen and sober
As the leaves that were crispéd and sere—
As the leaves that were withering and sere;
And I cried—"It was surely October
On *this* very night of last year
That I journeyed—I journeyed down here—
That I brought a dread burden down here—
On this night of all nights in the year,
Ah! what demon has tempted me here?
Well I know, now, this dim lake of Auber—
This misty mid region of Weir—
Well I know, now, this dank tarn of Auber,
This ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir."

Edgar Allan Poe

ROMANCE

Romance, who loves to nod and sing,
With drowsy head and folded wing,
Among the green leaves as they shake
Far down within some shadowy lake,
To me a painted paroquet
Hath been—a most familiar bird—
Taught me my alphabet to say—
To lisp my very earliest word
While in the wild wood I did lie,
A child—with a most knowing eye.
Of late, eternal Condor years
So shake the very Heaven on high
With tumult as they thunder by,
I have no time for idle cares
Through gazing on the unquiet sky.
And when an hour with calmer wings
Its down upon my spirit flings—
That little time with lyre and rhyme
To while away—forbidden things!
My heart would feel to be a crime
Unless it trembled with the strings.

THE CONQUEROR WORM

Lo! 'tis a gala night
  Within the lonesome latter years!
An angel throng, bewinged, bedight
  In veils, and drowned in tears,
Sit in a theatre, to see
  A play of hopes and fears,
While the orchestra breathes fitfully
  The music of the spheres.

Mimes, in the form of God on high,
  Mutter and mumble low,

And hither and thither fly—
  Mere puppets they, who come and go
At bidding of vast formless things
  That shift the scenery to and fro,
Flapping from out their Condor wings
  Invisible Wo!

That motley drama—oh, be sure
  It shall not be forgot!
With its Phantom chased for evermore
  By a crowd that seize it not,
Through a circle that ever returneth in
  To the self-same spot,
And much of Madness, and more of Sin,
  And Horror the soul of the plot.

But see, amid the mimic rout
  A crawling shape intrude!
A blood-red thing that writhes from out
  The scenic solitude!
It writhes!—it writhes!—with mortal pangs
  The mimes become its food,
And the seraphs sob at vermin fangs
  In human gore imbued.

Out—out are the lights—out all!
  And, over each quivering form,
The curtain, a funeral pall,
  Comes down with the rush of a storm,
And the angels, all pallid and wan,
  Uprising, unveiling, affirm
That the play is the tragedy "Man,"
  And its hero the Conqueror Worm.

SARAH HELEN WHITMAN (1803-1878)

SONNET TO EDGAR ALLAN POE

On our lone pathway bloomed no earthly hopes:
Sorrow and death were near us, as we stood
Where the dim forest, from the upland slopes,
Swept darkly to the sea. The enchanted wood
Thrilled, as by some foreboding terror stirred;
And as the waves broke on the lonely shore,
In their low monotone, methought I heard
A solemn voice that sighed, "Ye meet no more."
There, while the level sunbeams seemed to burn
Through the long aisles of red, autumnal gloom,—
Where stately, storied cenotaphs inurn
Sweet human hopes, too fair on Earth to bloom,—
Was the bud reaped, whose petals pure and cold
Sleep on my heart till Heaven the flower unfold.

RALPH WALDO EMERSON (1803-1882)

CONCORD HYMN

By the rude bridge that arched the flood,
  Their flag to April's breeze unfurled,
Here once the embattled farmers stood,
  And fired the shot heard round the world.

The foe long since in silence slept;
  Alike the conqueror silent sleeps;
And Time the ruined bridge has swept
  Down the dark stream which seaward creeps.

On this green bank, by this soft stream,
  We set to-day a votive stone;
That memory may their deed redeem,
  When, like our sires, our sons are gone.

Spirit, that made those heroes dare
To die, or leave their children free,
Bid Time and Nature gently spare
The shaft we raise to them and thee.

THE PROBLEM

I like a church; I like a cowl;
I love a prophet of the soul;
And on my heart monastic aisles
Fall like sweet strains, or pensive smiles;
Yet not for all his faith can see
Would I that cowled churchman be.

Why should the vest on him allure,
Which I could not on me endure?
Not from a vain or shallow thought
His awful Jove young Phidias brought;
Never from lips of cunning fell
The thrilling Delphic oracle;
Out from the heart of nature rolled
The burdens of the Bible old;
The litanies of nations came,
Like the volcano's tongue of flame,
Up from the burning core below,—
The canticles of love and woe;
The hand that rounded Peter's dome,
And groined the aisles of Christian Rome,
Wrought in a sad sincerity;
Himself from God he could not free;
He builded better than he knew;—
The conscious stone to beauty grew.

Know'st thou what wove yon woodbird's nest
Of leaves, and feathers from her breast?
Or how the fish outbuilt her shell,
Painting with morn each annual cell?

Or how the sacred pine-tree adds
To her old leaves new myriads?
Such and so grew these holy piles,
Whilst love and terror laid the tiles.
Earth proudly wears the Parthenon,
As the best gem upon her zone;
And Morning opes with haste her lids,
To gaze upon the Pyramids;
O'er England's abbeys bends the sky,
As on its friends, with kindred eye;
For, out of Thought's interior sphere
These wonders rose to upper air;
And Nature gladly gave them place,
Adopted them into her race,
And granted them an equal date
With Andes and with Ararat.

These temples grew as grows the grass;
Art might obey, but not surpass.
The passive Master lent his hand
To the vast soul that o'er him planned;
And the same power that reared the shrine,
Bestrode the tribes that knelt within.
Ever the fiery Pentecost
Girds with one flame the countless host,
Trances the heart through chanting choirs,
And through the priest the mind inspires.

The word unto the prophet spoken
Was writ on tables yet unbroken;
The word by seers or sibyls told,
In groves of oak, or fanes of gold,
Still floats upon the morning wind,
Still whispers to the willing mind.
One accent of the Holy Ghost
The heedless world hath never lost.
I know what say the fathers wise,—
The Book itself before me lies,

Old *Chrysostom*, best Augustine,
And he who blent both in his line,
The younger *Golden Lips* or mines,
Taylor, the Shakespeare of divines.
His words are music in my ear,
I see his cowled portrait dear;
And yet, for all his faith could see,
I would not the good bishop be.

GOOD-BYE

Good-bye, proud world! I'm going home:
Thou art not my friend, and I'm not thine.
Long through thy weary crowds I roam;
A river-ark on the ocean brine,
Long I've been tossed like the driven foam;
But now, proud world! I'm going home.

Good-bye to Flattery's fawning face;
To Grandeur with his wise grimace;
To upstart Wealth's averted eye;
To supple Office, low and high;
To crowded halls, to court and street;
To frozen hearts and hasting feet;
To those who go, and those who come;
Good-bye, proud world! I'm going home.

I am going to my own hearth-stone,
Bosomed in yon green hills alone,—
A secret nook in a pleasant land,
Whose groves the frolic fairies planned;
Where arches green, the livelong day,
Echo the blackbird's roundelay,
And vulgar feet have never trod
A spot that is sacred to thought and God.

O, when I am safe in my sylvan home,
I tread on the pride of Greece and Rome;

And when I am stretched beneath the pines,
Where the evening star so holy shines,
I laugh at the lore and the pride of man,
At the sophist schools, and the learned clan;
For what are they all, in their high conceit,
When man in the bush with God may meet?

THE RHODORA

In May, when sea-winds pierced our solitudes,
I found the fresh Rhodora in the woods,
Spreading its leafless blooms in a damp nook,
To please the desert and the sluggish brook.
The purple petals, fallen in the pool,
Made the black water with their beauty gay;
Here might the red-bird come his plumes to cool,
And court the flower that cheapens his array.
Rhodora! if the sages ask thee why
This charm is wasted on the earth and sky,
Tell them, dear, that if eyes were made for seeing,
Then Beauty is its own excuse for being:
Why thou wert there, O rival of the rose!
I never thought to ask, I never knew;
But, in my simple ignorance, suppose
The self-same Power that brought me there brought you.

FORBEARANCE

Hast thou named all the birds without a gun?
Loved the wood-rose, and left it on its stalk?
At rich men's tables eaten bread and pulse?
Unarmed, faced danger with a heart of trust?
And loved so well a high behaviour,
In man or maid, that thou from speech refrained,
Nobility more nobly to repay?
O, be my friend, and teach me to be thine!

GIVE ALL TO LOVE

Give all to love;
Obey thy heart;
Friends, kindred, days,
Estate, good-fame,
Plans, credit, and the Muse,—
Nothing refuse.

'Tis a brave master;
Let it have scope:
Follow it utterly,
Hope beyond hope:
High and more high
It dives into noon,
With wing unspent,
Untold intent;
But it is a god,
Knows its own path,
And the outlets of the sky.

It was not for the mean;
It requireth courage stout,
Souls above doubt,
Valour unbending;
Such 'twill reward,—
They shall return
More than they were,
And ever ascending.

Leave all for love;
Yet, hear me, yet,
One word more thy heart behoved,
One pulse more of firm endeavour,—
Keep thee to-day,
To-morrow, forever,
Free as an Arab
Of thy beloved.

Cling with life to the maid;
But when the surprise,
First vague shadow of surmise
Flits across her bosom young,
Of a joy apart from thee,
Free be she, fancy-free;
Nor thou detain her vesture's hem,
Nor the palest rose she flung
From her summer diadem.

Though thou loved her as thyself,
As a self of purer clay,
Though her parting dims the day,
Stealing grace from all alive;
Heartily know,
When half gods go,
The gods arrive.

BACCHUS

Bring me wine, but wine which never grew
In the belly of the grape,
Or grew on vine whose tap-roots, reaching through
Under the Andes to the Cape,
Suffered no savour of the earth to scape.

Let its grapes the morn salute
From a nocturnal root,
Which feels the acrid juice
Of Styx and Erebus;
And turns the woe of Night,
By its own craft, to a more rich delight.

We buy ashes for bread;
We buy diluted wine;
Give me of the true,—
Whose ample leaves and tendrils curled

Among the silver hills of heaven,
Draw everlasting dew;
Wine of wine,
Blood of the world,
Form of forms, and mould of statures,
That I intoxicated,
And by the draught assimilated,
May float at pleasure through all natures;
The bird-language rightly spell,
And that which roses say so well.
Wine that is shed
Like the torrents of the sun
Up the horizon walls,
Or like the Atlantic streams, which run
When the South Sea calls.

Water and bread,
Food which needs no transmuting,
Rainbow-flowering, wisdom-fruiting
Wine which is already man,
Food which teach and reason can.

Wine which Music is,—
Music and wine are one,—
That I, drinking this,
Shall hear far Chaos talk with me;
Kings unborn shall walk with me;
And the poor grass shall plot and plan
What it will do when it is man.
Quickened so, will I unlock
Every crypt of every rock.

I thank the joyful juice
For all I know;—
Winds of remembering
Of the ancient being blow,
And seeming-solid walls of use
Open and flow.

Pour, Bacchus! the remembering wine;
Retrieve the loss of me and mine!
Vine for vine be antidote,
And the grape requite the lote!
Haste to cure the old despair,—
Reason in Nature's lotus drenched,
The memory of ages quenched;
Give them again to shine;
Let wine repair what this undid;
And where the infection slid,
A dazzling memory revive;
Refresh the faded tints,
Recut the aged prints,
And write my old adventures with the pen
Which on the first day drew,
Upon the tablets blue,
The dancing Pleiads and eternal men.

BRAHMA

If the red slayer think he slays,
  Or if the slain think he is slain,
They know not well the subtle ways
  I keep, and pass, and turn again.

Far or forgot to me is near;
  Shadow and sunlight are the same;
The vanquished gods to me appear;
  And one to me are shame and fame.

They reckon ill who leave me out;
  When me they fly, I am the wings;
I am the doubter and the doubt,
  And I the hymn the Brahmin sings.

The strong gods pine for my abode,
  And pine in vain the sacred Seven;
But thou, meek lover of the good!
  Find me, and turn thy back on heaven.

DAYS

Damsels of Time, the hypocritic Days,
Muffled and dumb like barefoot dervishes,
And marching single in an endless file,
Bring diadems and fagots in their hands.
To each they offer gifts after his will,
Bread, kingdoms, stars, and sky that holds them all.
I, in my pleached garden, watched the pomp,
Forgot my morning wishes, hastily
Took a few herbs and apples, and the Day
Turned and departed silent. I too late,
Under her solemn fillet saw the scorn.

SEA-SHORE

I heard or seemed to hear the chiding Sea
Say, Pilgrim, why so late and slow to come?
Am I not always here, thy summer home?
Is not my voice thy music, morn and eve?
My breath thy healthful climate in the heats,
My touch thy antidote, my bay thy bath?
Was ever building like my terraces?
Was ever couch magnificent as mine?
Lie on the warm rock-ledges, and there learn
A little hut suffices like a town.
I make your sculptured architecture vain,
Vain beside mine. I drive my wedges home,
And carve the coastwise mountain into caves.
Lo! here is Rome, and Nineveh, and Thebes,
Karnak, and Pyramid, and Giant's Stairs,
Half piled or prostrate; and my newest slab
Older than all thy race.
Behold the Sea,
The opaline, the plentiful and strong,
Yet beautiful as is the rose in June,
Fresh as the trickling rainbow of July;

Sea full of food, the nourisher of kinds,
Purger of earth, and medicine of men;
Creating a sweet climate by my breath,
Washing out harms and griefs from memory,
And, in my mathematic ebb and flow,
Giving a hint of that which changes not.
Rich are the sea-gods:—who gives gifts but they?
They grope the sea for pearls, but more than pearls:
They pluck Force thence, and give it to the wise.
For every wave is wealth to Dædalus,
Wealth to the cunning artist who can work
This matchless strength. Where shall he find, O waves!
A load your Atlas shoulders cannot lift?

I with my hammer pounding evermore
The rocky coast, smite Andes into dust,
Strewing my bed, and, in another age,
Rebuild a continent of better men.
Then I unbar the doors: my paths lead out
The exodus of nations: I disperse
Men to all shores that front the hoary main.

I too have arts and sorceries;
Illusion dwells forever with the wave.
I know what spells are laid. Leave me to deal
With credulous and imaginative man;
For, though he scoop my water in his palm
A few rods off he deems it gems and clouds.
Planting strange fruits and sunshine on the shore,
I make some coast alluring, some lone isle,
To distant men, who must go there, or die.

EXPERIENCE

The lords of life, the lords of life,—
I saw them pass,
In their own guise,
Like and unlike,

Portly and grim,—
Use and Surprise,
Surface and Dream,
Success in swift and spectral Wrong,
Temperament without a tongue,
And the inventor of the game
Omnipresent without name;—
Some to see, some to be guessed,
They march from east to west:
Little man, least of all,
Among the legs of his guardians tall,
Walked about with puzzled look.
Him by the hand dear Nature took,
Dearest Nature, strong and kind,
Whispered, "Darling, never mind!
To-morrow they will wear another face,
The founder thou; these are thy race!"

ELLEN HOOPER (1812-1848)

TO R. W. E.

Dry lighted soul, the ray that shines in thee,
  Shot without reflex from primeval sun,
We twine the laurel for the victories
  Which thou on thought's broad, bloodless field hast won.

Thou art the mountain where we climb to see
  The land our feet have trod this many a year.
Thou art the deep and crystal winter sky,
  Where noiseless, one by one, bright stars appear.

It may be Bacchus, at thy birth, forgot
  That drop from out the purple grape to press
Which is his gift to man, and so thy blood
  Doth miss the heat which ofttimes breeds excess.

But, all more surely do we turn to thee
When the day's heat and blinding dust are o'er,
And cool our souls in thy refreshing air,
And find the peace which we had lost before.

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW
(1807-1882)

THE DAY IS DONE

The day is done, and the darkness
Falls from the wings of Night,
As a feather is wafted downward
From an eagle in his flight.

I see the lights of the village
Gleam through the rain and the mist,
And a feeling of sadness comes o'er me
That my soul cannot resist:

A feeling of sadness and longing,
That is not akin to pain,
And resembles sorrow only
As the mist resembles the rain.

Come, read to me some poem,
Some simple and heartfelt lay,
That shall soothe this restless feeling,
And banish the thoughts of day.

Not from the grand old masters,
Not from the bards sublime,
Whose distant footsteps echo
Through the corridors of Time.

For, like strains of martial music,
Their mighty thoughts suggest
Life's endless toil and endeavor;
And to-night I long for rest.

Read from some humbler poet,
Whose songs gushed from his heart,
As showers from the clouds of summer,
Or tears from the eyelids start;

Who, through long days of labor,
And nights devoid of ease,
Still heard in his soul the music
Of wonderful melodies.

Such songs have power to quiet
The restless pulse of care,
And come like the benediction
That follows after prayer.

Then read from the treasured volume
The poem of thy choice,
And lend to the rhyme of the poet
The beauty of thy voice.

And the night shall be filled with music,
And the cares, that infest the day,
Shall fold their tents, like the Arabs,
And as silently steal away.

THE ARROW AND THE SONG

I shot an arrow into the air,
It fell to earth, I knew not where;
For, so swiftly it flew, the sight
Could not follow it in its flight.

I breathed a song into the air,
It fell to earth, I knew not where;
For who has sight so keen and strong,
That it can follow the flight of song?

Long, long afterward, in an oak
I found the arrow, still unbroke;
And the song, from beginning to end,
I found again in the heart of a friend.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

DIVINA COMMEDIA

I

Oft have I seen at some cathedral door
A laborer, pausing in the dust and heat,
Lay down his burden, and with reverent feet
Enter, and cross himself, and on the floor
Kneel to repeat his paternoster o'er;
Far off the noises of the world retreat;
The loud vociferations of the street
Become an undistinguishable roar.
So, as I enter here from day to day,
And leave my burden at this minster gate,
Kneeling in prayer, and not ashamed to pray,
The tumult of the time disconsolate
To inarticulate murmurs dies away,
While the eternal ages watch and wait.

II

How strange the sculptures that adorn these towers!
This crowd of statues, in whose folded sleeves
Birds build their nests; while canopied with leaves
Parvis and portal bloom like trellised bowers,
And the vast minster seems a cross of flowers!
But fiends and dragons on the gargoyled eaves
Watch the dead Christ between the living thieves,
And, underneath, the traitor Judas lowers!
Ah! from what agonies of heart and brain,
What exultations trampling on despair,
What tenderness, what tears, what hate of wrong,
What passionate outcry of a soul in pain,
Uprose this poem of the earth and air,
This mediæval miracle of song!

III

I enter, and I see thee in the gloom
Of the long aisles, O poet saturnine!
And strive to make my steps keep pace with thine
The air is filled with some unknown perfume;
The congregation of the dead make room
For thee to pass; the votive tapers shine;
Like rooks that haunt Ravenna's groves of pine
The hovering echoes fly from tomb to tomb.
From the confessionals I hear arise
Rehearsals of forgotten tragedies,
And lamentations from the crypts below;
And then a voice celestial that begins
With the pathetic words, "Although your sins
As scarlet be," and ends with "as the snow."

IV

With snow-white veil and garments as of flame,
She stands before thee, who so long ago
Filled thy young heart with passion and the woe
From which thy song and all its splendors came;
And while with stern rebuke she speaks thy name,
The ice about thy heart melts as the snow
On mountain heights, and in swift overflow
Comes gushing from thy lips in sobs of shame.
Thou makest full confession; and a gleam,
As of the dawn on some dark forest cast,
Seems on thy lifted forehead to increase;
Lethe and Eunoë—the remembered dream
And the forgotten sorrow—bring at last
That perfect pardon which is perfect peace.

V

I lift mine eyes, and all the windows blaze
With forms of Saints and holy men who died,
Here martyred and hereafter glorified;
And the great Rose upon its leaves displays

Christ's Triumph, and the angelic roundelays,
With splendor upon splendor multiplied;
And Beatrice again at Dante's side
No more rebukes, but smiles her words of praise.
And then the organ sounds, and unseen choirs
Sing the old Latin hymns of peace and love
And benedictions of the Holy Ghost;
And the melodious bells among the spires
O'er all the house-tops and through heaven above
Proclaim the elevation of the Host!

VI

O star of morning and of liberty!
O bringer of the light, whose splendor shines
Above the darkness of the Apennines,
Forerunner of the day that is to be!
The voices of the city and the sea,
The voices of the mountains and the pines,
Repeat thy song, till the familiar lines
Are footpaths for the thought of Italy!
Thy flame is blown abroad from all the heights,
Through all the nations, and a sound is heard,
As of a mighty wind, and men devout,
Strangers of Rome, and the new proselytes,
In their own language hear thy wondrous word,
And many are amazed and many doubt.

THE CROSS OF SNOW

In the long, sleepless watches of the night,
A gentle face—the face of one long dead—
Looks at me from the wall, where round its head
The night-lamp casts a halo of pale light.
Here in this room she died; and soul more white
Never through martyrdom of fire was led
To its repose; nor can in books be read
The legend of a life more benedight.

There is a mountain in the distant West
That, sun-defying, in its deep ravines
Displays a cross of snow upon its side.
Such is the cross I wear upon my breast
These eighteen years, through all the changing scenes
And seasons, changeless since the day she died.

AZRAEL

King Solomon, before his palace gate
At evening, on the pavement tessellate
Was walking with a stranger from the East,
Arrayed in rich attire as for a feast,
The mighty Runjeet-Sing, a learned man,
And Rajah of the realms of Hindostan.
And as they walked the guest became aware
Of a white figure in the twilight air,
Gazing intent, as one who with surprise
His form and features seemed to recognize;
And in a whisper to the king he said:
"What is yon shape, that, pallid as the dead,
Is watching me, as if he sought to trace
In the dim light the features of my face?"

The king looked, and replied: "I know him well;
It is the Angel men call Azrael,
'Tis the Death Angel; what hast thou to fear?"
And the guest answered: "Lest he should come near,
And speak to me, and take away my breath!
Save me from Azrael, save me from death!
O king, that hast dominion o'er the wind,
Bid it arise and bear me hence to Ind."

The king gazed upward at the cloudless sky,
Whispered a word, and raised his hand on high,
And lo! the signet-ring of chrysoprase
On his uplifted finger seemed to blaze

With hidden fire, and rushing from the west
There came a mighty wind, and seized the guest
And lifted him from earth, and on they passed,
His shining garments streaming in the blast,
A silken banner o'er the walls upreared,
A purple cloud, that gleamed and disappeared.
Then said the Angel, smiling: "If this man
Be Rajah Runjeet-Sing of Hindostan,
Thou hast done well in listening to his prayer;
I was upon my way to seek him there."

CHARLEMAGNE

Olger the Dane and Desiderio,
King of the Lombards, on a lofty tower
Stood gazing northward o'er the rolling plains,
League after league of harvest, to the foot
Of the snow-crested Alps, and saw approach
A mighty army, thronging all the roads
That led into the city. And the King
Said unto Olger, who had passed his youth
As hostage at the court of France, and knew
The Emperor's form and face: "Is Charlemagne
Among the host?" And Olger answered: "No."

And still the innumerable multitude
Flowed onward and increased, until the King
Cried in amazement: "Surely Charlemagne
Is coming in the midst of all these knights!"
And Olger answered slowly: "No; not yet;
He will not come so soon." Then much disturbed
King Desiderio asked: "What shall we do,
If he approach with a still greater army?"
And Olger answered: "When he shall appear,
You will behold what manner of man he is;
But what will then befall us I know not."

Then came the guard that never knew repose,
The Paladins of France! and at the sight
The Lombard King o'ercome with terror cried:
"This must be Charlemagne!" and as before
Did Olger answer: "No; not yet, not yet."

And then appeared in panoply complete
The Bishops and the Abbots and the Priests
Of the imperial chapel, and the Counts;
And Desiderio could no more endure
The light of day, nor yet encounter death,
But sobbed aloud and said: "Let us go down
And hide us in the bosom of the earth,
Far from the sight and anger of a foe
So terrible as this!" And Olger said:
"When you behold the harvests in the fields
Shaking with fear, the Po and the Ticino
Lashing the city walls with iron waves,
Then may you know that Charlemagne is come."
And even as he spake, in the northwest,
Lo! there uprose a black and threatening cloud,
Out of whose bosom flashed the light of arms
Upon the people pent up in the city;
A light more terrible than any darkness,
And Charlemagne appeared;—a Man of Iron!

His helmet was of iron, and his gloves
Of iron, and his breastplate and his greaves
And tassets were of iron, and his shield.
In his left hand he held an iron spear,
In his right hand his sword invincible.
The horse he rode on had the strength of iron,
And color of iron. All who went before him,
Beside him and behind him, his whole host,
Were armed with iron, and their hearts within them
Were stronger than the armor that they wore.
The fields and all the roads were filled with iron,
And points of iron glistened in the sun
And shed a terror through the city streets.

This at a single glance Olger the Dane
Saw from the tower, and turning to the King
Exclaimed in haste: "Behold; this is the man
You looked for with such eagerness!" and then
Fell as one dead at Desiderio's feet.

HYMN TO THE NIGHT

I heard the trailing garments of the Night
Sweep through her marble halls!
I saw her sable skirts all fringed with light
From the celestial walls!

I felt her presence, by its spell of might,
Stoop o'er me from above;
The calm, majestic presence of the Night,
As of the one I love.

I heard the sounds of sorrow and delight,
The manifold, soft chimes,
That fill the haunted chambers of the Night,
Like some old poet's rhymes.

From the cool cisterns of the midnight air
My spirit drank repose;
The fountain of perpetual peace flows there,—
From those deep cisterns flows.

O holy Night! from thee I learn to bear
What man has borne before!
Thou layest thy finger on the lips of Care,
And they complain no more.

Peace! Peace! Orestes-like I breathe this prayer!
Descend with broad-winged flight,
The welcome, the thrice-prayed for, the most fair,
The best-beloved Night!

JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER
(1807-1892)

THE PRESSED GENTIAN

The time of gifts has come again,
And, on my northern window-pane,
Outlined against the day's brief light,
A Christmas token hangs in sight.
The wayside travellers, as they pass,
Mark the gray disk of clouded glass;
And the dull blankness seems, perchance,
Folly to their wise ignorance.

They cannot from their outlook see
The perfect grace it hath for me;
For there the flower, whose fringes through
The frosty breath of autumn blew,
Turns from without its face of bloom
To the warm tropic of my room,
And fair as when beside its brook
The hue of bending skies it took.

So from the trodden ways of earth,
Seem some sweet souls who veil their worth,
And offer to the careless glance
The clouding gray of circumstance.
They blossom best where hearth-fires burn,
To loving eyes alone they turn
The flowers of inward grace, that hide
Their beauty from the world outside.

But deeper meanings come to me,
My half-immortal flower, from thee!
Man judges from a partial view,
None ever yet his brother knew;

The Eternal Eye that sees the whole
May better read the darkened soul,
And find, to outward sense denied,
The flower upon its inmost side!

THE TRAILING ARBUTUS

I wandered lonely where the pine-trees made
Against the bitter East their barricade,
And, guided by its sweet
Perfume, I found, within a narrow dell,
The trailing spring flower tinted like a shell
Amid dry leaves and mosses at my feet.

From under dead boughs, for whose loss the pines
Moaned ceaseless overhead, the blossoming vines
Lifted their glad surprise,
While yet the bluebird smoothed in leafless trees
His feathers ruffled by the chill sea-breeze,
And snow-drifts lingered under April skies.

As, pausing, o'er the lonely flower I bent,
I thought of lives thus lowly, clogged and pent,
Which yet find room,
Through care and cumber, coldness and decay,
To lend a sweetness to the ungenial day,
And make the sad earth happier for their bloom.

ICHABOD

So fallen! so lost! the light withdrawn
Which once he wore!
The glory from his gray hairs gone
Forevermore!

Revile him not, the Tempter hath
A snare for all;
And pitying tears, not scorn and wrath,
Befit his fall!

Oh, dumb be passion's stormy rage,
When he who might
Have lighted up and led his age,
Falls back in night.

Scorn! would the angels laugh, to mark
A bright soul driven,
Fiend-goaded, down the endless dark,
From hope and heaven!

Let not the land once proud of him
Insult him now,
Nor brand with deeper shame his dim,
Dishonored brow.

But let its humbled sons, instead,
From sea to lake,
A long lament, as for the dead,
In sadness make.

Of all we loved and honored, naught
Save power remains;
A fallen angel's pride of thought,
Still strong in chains.

All else is gone; from those great eyes
The soul has fled:
When faith is lost, when honor dies,
The man is dead!

Then, pay the reverence of old days
To his dead fame;
Walk backward, with averted gaze,
And hide the shame!

THE HUNTERS OF MEN

Have ye heard of our hunting, o'er mountain and glen,
Through cane-brake and forest,—the hunting of men?

The lords of our land to this hunting have gone,
As the fox-hunter follows the sound of the horn;
Hark! the cheer and the hallo! the crack of the whip,
And the yell of the hound as he fastens his grip!
All blithe are our hunters, and noble their match,
Though hundreds are caught, there are millions to catch.
So speed to their hunting, o'er mountain and glen,
Through cane-brake and forest,—the hunting of men!

Gay luck to our hunters! how nobly they ride
In the glow of their zeal, and strength of their pride!
The priest with his cassock flung back on the wind,
Just screening the politic statesman behind;
The saint and the sinner, with cursing and prayer,
The drunk and the sober, ride merrily there.
And woman, kind woman, wife, widow, and maid,
For the good of the hunted, is lending her aid:
Her foot's in the stirrup, her hand on the rein,
How blithely she rides to the hunting of men!

Oh, goodly and grand is our hunting to see,
In this "land of the brave and this home of the free."
Priest, warrior, and statesman, from Georgia to Maine,
All mounting the saddle, all grasping the rein;
Right merrily hunting the black man, whose sin
Is the curl of his hair and the hue of his skin!
Woe, now, to the hunted who turns him at bay!
Will our hunters be turned from their purpose and prey?
Will their hearts fail within them? their nerves tremble, when
All roughly they ride to the hunting of men?

Ho! alms for our hunters! all weary and faint,
Wax the curse of the sinner and prayer of the saint.
The horn is wound faintly, the echoes are still,
Over cane-brake and river, and forest and hill.
Haste, alms for our hunters! the hunted once more
Have turned from their flight with their backs to the shore:

What right have they here in the home of the white,
Shadowed o'er by our banner of Freedom and Right?
Ho! alms for the hunters! or never again
Will they ride in their pomp to the hunting of men!

Alms, alms for our hunters! why will ye delay,
When their pride and their glory are melting away?
The parson has turned; for, on charge of his own,
Who goeth a warfare, or hunting, alone?
The politic statesman looks back with a sigh,
There is doubt in his heart, there is fear in his eye.
Oh, haste, lest that doubting and fear shall prevail,
And the head of his steed take the place of the tail.
Oh, haste, ere he leave us! for who will ride then,
For pleasure or gain, to the hunting of men?

SONG OF SLAVES IN THE DESERT

Where are we going? where are we going,
Where are we going, Rubee?
Lord of peoples, lord of lands,
Look across these shining sands,
Through the furnace of the noon,
Through the white light of the moon.
Strong the Ghiblee wind is blowing,
Strange and large the world is growing!
Speak and tell us where we are going,
Where are we going, Rubee?

Bornou land was rich and good,
Wells of water, fields of food,
Dourra fields, and bloom of bean,
And the palm-tree cool and green:
Bornou land we see no longer,
Here we thirst and here we hunger,
Here the Moor-man smites in anger:
Where are we going, Rubee?

When we went from Bornou land,
We were like the leaves and sand,
We were many, we are few;
Life has one, and death has two:
Whitened bones our path are showing,
Thou All-seeing, thou All-knowing!
Hear us, tell us, where are we going,
Where are we going, Rubee?

Moons of marches from our eyes
Bornou land behind us lies;
Stranger round us day by day
Bends the desert circle gray;
Wild the waves of sand are flowing,
Hot the winds above them blowing,—
Lord of all things! where are we going?
Where are we going, Rubee?

We are weak, but Thou art strong;
Short our lives, but Thine is long;
We are blind, but Thou hast eyes;
We are fools, but Thou art wise!
Thou, our morrow's pathway knowing
Through the strange world round us growing,
Hear us, tell us where are we going,
Where are we going, Rubee?

THE ETERNAL GOODNESS

O friends! with whom my feet have trod
The quiet aisles of prayer,
Glad witness to your zeal for God
And love of man I bear.

I trace your lines of argument;
Your logic linked and strong
I weigh as one who dreads dissent,
And fears a doubt as wrong.

But still my human hands are weak
To hold your iron creeds:
Against the words ye bid me speak
My heart within me pleads.

Who fathoms the Eternal Thought?
Who talks of scheme and plan?
The Lord is God! He needeth not
The poor device of man.

I walk with bare, hushed feet the ground
Ye tread with boldness shod;
I dare not fix with mete and bound
The love and power of God.

Ye praise His justice; even such
His pitying love I deem:
Ye seek a king; I fain would touch
The robe that hath no seam.

Ye see the curse which overbroods
A world of pain and loss;
I hear our Lord's beatitudes
And prayer upon the cross.

More than your schoolmen teach, within
Myself, alas! I know:
Too dark ye cannot paint the sin,
Too small the merit show.

I bow my forehead to the dust,
I veil mine eyes for shame,
And urge, in trembling self-distrust,
A prayer without a claim.

I see the wrong that round me lies,
I feel the guilt within;
I hear, with groan and travail-cries,
The world confess its sin.

Yet, in the maddening maze of things,
And tossed by storm and flood,
To one fixed trust my spirit clings;
I know that God is good!

Not mine to look where cherubim
And seraphs may not see,
But nothing can be good in Him
Which evil is in me.

The wrong that pains my soul below
I dare not throne above,
I know not of His hate,—I know
His goodness and His love.

I dimly guess from blessings known
Of greater out of sight,
And, with the chastened Psalmist, own
His judgments too are right.

I long for household voices gone,
For vanished smiles I long,
But God hath led my dear ones on,
And He can do no wrong.

I know not what the future hath
Of marvel or surprise,
Assured alone that life and death
His mercy underlies.

And if my heart and flesh are weak
To bear an untried pain,
The bruisëd reed He will not break,
But strengthen and sustain.

No offering of my own I have,
Nor works my faith to prove;
I can but give the gifts He gave,
And plead His love for love.

And so beside the Silent Sea
I wait the muffled oar;
No harm from Him can come to me
On ocean or on shore.

I know not where His islands lift
Their fronded palms in air;
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond His love and care.

O brothers! if my faith is vain,
If hopes like these betray,
Pray for me that my feet may gain
The sure and safer way.

And Thou, O Lord! by whom are seen
Thy creatures as they be,
Forgive me if too close I lean
My human heart on Thee!

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES
(1809-1894)

THE LAST LEAF

I saw him once before,
As he passed by the door,
And again
The pavement stones resound,
As he totters o'er the ground
With his cane.

They say that in his prime,
Ere the pruning-knife of Time
Cut him down,
Not a better man was found
By the Crier on his round
Through the town.

But now he walks the streets,
And he looks at all he meets
Sad and wan,
And he shakes his feeble head,
That it seems as if he said,
"They are gone."

The mossy marbles rest
On the lips that he has prest
In their bloom,
And the names he loved to hear
Have been carved for many a year
On the tomb.

My grandmamma has said—
Poor old lady, she is dead
Long ago—
That he had a Roman nose,
And his cheek was like a rose
In the snow.

But now his nose is thin,
And it rests upon his chin
Like a staff,
And a crook is in his back,
And a melancholy crack
In his laugh.

I know it is a sin
For me to sit and grin
At him here;
But the old three-cornered hat,
And the breeches, and all that,
Are so queer!

And if I should live to be
The last leaf upon the tree
In the spring,

Let them smile, as I do now,
At the old forsaken bough
Where I cling.

THE BALLAD OF THE OYSTERMAN

It was a tall young oysterman lived by the river-side,
His shop was just upon the bank, his boat was on the tide;
The daughter of a fisherman, that was so straight and slim,
Lived over on the other bank, right opposite to him.

It was the pensive oysterman that saw a lovely maid,
Upon a moonlight evening, a sitting in the shade;
He saw her wave her handkerchief, as much as if to say,
"I'm wide awake, young oysterman, and all the folks away."

Then up arose the oysterman, and to himself said he,
"I guess I'll leave the skiff at home, for fear that folks should see;
I read it in the story-book, that, for to kiss his dear,
Leander swam the Hellespont,—and I will swim this here."

And he has leaped into the waves, and crossed the shining stream,
And he has clambered up the bank, all in the moonlight gleam;
O there were kisses sweet as dew, and words as soft as rain,—
But they have heard her father's step, and in he leaps again!

Out spoke the ancient fisherman,—"O what was that, my daughter?"
"'Twas nothing but a pebble, sir, I threw into the water."
"And what is that, pray tell me, love, that paddles off so fast?"
"It's nothing but a porpoise, sir, that's been a swimming past."

Out spoke the ancient fisherman,—"Now bring me my harpoon!
I'll get into my fishing-boat, and fix the fellow soon."
Down fell that pretty innocent, as falls a snow-white lamb,
Her hair drooped round her pallid cheeks, like seaweed on a clam.

Alas for those two loving ones! she waked not from her swound,
And he was taken with the cramp, and in the waves was drowned;
But Fate has metamorphosed them, in pity of their woe,
And now they keep an oyster-shop for mermaids down below.

THE MORAL BULLY

Yon whey-faced brother, who delights to wear
A weedy flux of ill-conditioned hair,
Seems of the sort that in a crowded place
One elbows freely into smallest space;
A timid creature, lax of knee and hip,
Whom small disturbance whitens round the lip;
One of those harmless spectacled machines,
The Holy-Week of Protestants convenes;
Whom school-boys question if their walk transcends
The last advices of maternal friends;
Whom John, obedient to his master's sign,
Conducts, laborious, up to *ninety-nine,*
While Peter, glistening with luxurious scorn,
Husks his white ivories like an ear of corn;
Dark in the brow and bilious in the cheek,
Whose yellowish linen flowers but once a week,
Conspicuous, annual, in their threadbare suits,
And the laced high-lows which they call their boots
Well mayst thou *shun* that dingy front severe,
But him, O stranger, him thou canst not *fear!*

Be slow to judge, and slower to despise,
Man of broad shoulders and heroic size!
The tiger, writhing from the boa's rings,
Drops at the fountain where the cobra stings.
In that lean phantom, whose extended glove
Points to the text of universal love,
Behold the master that can tame thee down
To crouch, the vassal of his Sunday frown;

His velvet throat against thy corded wrist,
His loosened tongue against thy doubled fist!
The MORAL BULLY, though he never swears,
Nor kicks intruders down his entry stairs,
Though meekness plants his backward-sloping hat,
And non-resistance ties his white cravat,
Though his black broadcloth glories to be seen
In the same plight with Shylock's gaberdine,
Hugs the same passion to his narrow breast
That heaves the cuirass on the trooper's chest,
Hears the same hell-hounds yelling in his rear
That chase from port the maddened buccaneer,
Feels the same comfort while his acrid words
Turn the sweet milk of kindness into curds,
Or with grim logic prove, beyond debate,
That all we love is worthiest of our hate,
As the scarred ruffian of the pirate's deck,
When his long swivel rakes the staggering wreck!

Heaven keep us all! Is every rascal clown
Whose arm is stronger free to knock us down?
Has every scarecrow, whose cachectic soul
Seems fresh from Bedlam, airing on parole,
Who, though he carries but a doubtful trace
Of angel visits on his hungry face,
From lack of marrow or the coins to pay,
Has dodged some vices in a shabby way,
The right to stick us with his cutthroat terms,
And bait his homilies with his brother worms?

THE CHAMBERED NAUTILUS

This is the ship of pearl, which, poets feign,
Sails the unshadowed main,—
That venturous bark that flings
On the sweet summer wind its purpled wings
In gulfs enchanted, where the Siren sings,

And coral reefs lie bare,
Where the cold sea-maids rise to sun their streaming hair.

Its webs of living gauze no more unfurl;
Wrecked is the ship of pearl!
And every chambered cell,
Where its dim dreaming life was wont to dwell,
As the frail tenant shaped his growing shell,
Before thee lies revealed,—
Its irised ceiling rent, its sunless crypt unsealed!

Year after year beheld the silent toil
That spread his lustrous coil;
Still, as the spiral grew,
He left the past year's dwelling for the new,
Stole with soft step its shining archway through,
Built up its idle door,
Stretched in his last-found home, and knew the old no more.

Thanks for the heavenly message brought by thee,
Child of the wandering sea,
Cast from her lap, forlorn!
From thy dead lips a clearer note is born
Than ever Triton blew from wreathéd horn!
While on mine ear it rings,
Through the deep caves of thought I hear a voice that sings:—

Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul,
As the swift seasons roll!
Leave thy low-vaulted past!
Let each new temple, nobler than the last,
Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast,
Till thou at length art free,
Leaving thine outgrown shell by life's unresting sea!

JONES VERY (1813-1880)

THE TREE

I love thee when thy swelling buds appear,
And one by one their tender leaves unfold,
As if they knew that warmer suns were near,
Nor longer sought to hide from winter's cold;
And when with darker growth thy leaves are seen
To veil from view the early robin's nest,
I love to lie beneath thy waving screen,
With limbs by summer's heat and toil oppress'd;
And when the autumn winds have stript thee bare,
And round thee lies the smooth, untrodden snow,
When naught is thine that made thee once so fair,
I love to watch thy shadowy form below,
And through thy leafless arms to look above
On stars that brighter beam when most we need their love.

THE SPIRIT-LAND

Father! thy wonders do not singly stand,
Nor far removed where feet have seldom stray'd;
Around us ever lies the enchanted land,
In marvels rich to thine own sons display'd;
In finding thee are all things round us found;
In losing thee are all things lost beside;
Ears have we, but in vain strange voices sound,
And to our eyes the vision is denied;
We wander in the country far remote,
Mid tombs and ruin'd piles in death to dwell;
Or on the records of past greatness dote,
And for a buried soul the living sell;
While on our path bewilder'd falls the night
That ne'er returns us to the fields of light.

NATURE

The bubbling brook doth leap when I come by,
Because my feet find measure with its call;
The birds know when the friend they love is nigh,
For I am known to them, both great and small;
The flower that on the lovely hill-side grows
Expects me there when spring its bloom has given;
And many a tree and bush my wanderings knows,
And e'en the clouds and silent stars of heaven;
For he who with his Maker walks aright,
Shall be their lord as Adam was before;
His ear shall catch each sound with new delight,
Each object wear the dress that then it wore;
And he, as when erect in soul he stood,
Hear from his Father's lips that all is good.

CHRISTOPHER PEARSE CRANCH
(1813-1892)

GNOSIS

Thought is deeper than all speech,
Feeling deeper than all thought:
Souls to souls can never teach
What unto themselves was taught.

We are spirits clad in veils;
Man by man was never seen;
All our deep communing fails
To remove the shadowy screen.

Heart to heart was never known;
Mind with mind did never meet;
We are columns left alone
Of a temple once complete.

Like the stars that gem the sky,
  Far apart though seeming near,
In our light we scattered lie;
  All is thus but starlight here.

What is social company
  But a babbling summer stream?
What our wise philosophy
  But the glancing of a dream?

Only when the Sun of Love
  Melts the scattered stars of thought,
Only when we live above
  What the dim-eyed world hath taught,

Only when our souls are fed
  By the Fount which gave them birth,
And by inspiration led
  Which they never drew from earth,

We, like parted drops or rain,
  Swelling till they meet and run,
Shall be all absorbed again,
  Melting, flowing into one.

THE PINES AND THE SEA

Beyond the low marsh-meadows and the beach,
Seen through the hoary trunks of windy pines,
The long blue level of the ocean shines.
The distant surf, with hoarse, complaining speech,
Out from its sandy barrier seems to reach;
And while the sun behind the woods declines,
The moaning sea with sighing boughs combines,
And waves and pines make answer, each to each.
O melancholy soul, whom far and near,
In life, faith, hope, the same sad undertone

Pursues from thought to thought! thou needs must hear
An old refrain, too much, too long thine own:
'Tis thy mortality infects thine ear;
The mournful strain was in thyself alone.

HENRY DAVID THOREAU
(1817-1862)

INSPIRATION

If with light head erect I sing,
Though all the Muses lend their force,
From my poor love of anything,
The verse is weak and shallow as its source.

But if with bended neck I grope
Listening behind me for my wit,
With faith superior to hope,
More anxious to keep back than forward it,—

Making my soul accomplice there
Unto the flame my heart hath lit,
Then will the verse forever wear,—
Time cannot bend the line which God has writ.

I hearing get, who had but ears,
And sight, who had but eyes before;
I moments live, who lived but years,
And truth discern, who knew but learning's lore.

Now chiefly is my natal hour,
And only now my prime of life;
Of manhood's strength it is the flower,
'Tis peace's end, and war's beginning strife.

It comes in summer's broadest noon,
By a gray wall, or some chance place,
Unseasoning time, insulting June,
And vexing day with its presuming face.

I will not doubt the love untold
Which not my worth nor want hath bought,
Which wooed me young, and woos me old,
And to this evening hath me brought.

THE FISHER'S BOY

My life is like a stroll upon the beach,
  As near the ocean's edge as I can go;
My tardy steps its waves sometimes o'er-reach,
  Sometimes I stay to let them overflow.

My sole employment is, and scrupulous care,
  To place my gains beyond the reach of tides,—
Each smoother pebble, and each shell more rare,
  Which Ocean kindly to my hand confides.

I have but few companions on the shore:
  They scorn the strand who sail upon the sea;
Yet oft I think the ocean they've sailed o'er
  Is deeper known upon the strand to me.

The middle sea contains no crimson dulse,
  Its deeper waves cast up no pearls to view;
Along the shore my hand is on its pulse,
  And I converse with many a shipwrecked crew.

SMOKE

Light-winged Smoke! Icarian bird,
Melting thy pinions in thy upward flight;
Lark without song, and messenger of dawn,
Circling above the hamlets as thy nest;
Or else, departing dream, and shadowy form
Of midnight vision, gathering up thy skirts;
By night star-veiling, and by day
Darkening the light and blotting out the sun;
Go thou, my incense, upward from this hearth,
And ask the gods to pardon this clear flame.

WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING
(1818-1901)

FROM "A POET'S HOPE"

Lady, there is a hope that all men have,—
Some mercy for their faults, a grassy place
To rest in, and a flower-strown, gentle grave;
Another hope which purifies our race,
That, when that fearful bourne forever past,
They may find rest,—and rest so long to last.

I seek it not, I ask no rest for ever,
My path is onward to the farthest shores,—
Upbear me in your arms, unceasing river,
That from the soul's clear fountain swiftly pours,
Motionless not, until the end is won,
Which now I feel hath scarcely felt the sun.

To feel, to know, to soar unlimited
Mid throngs of light-winged angels sweeping far,
And pore upon the realms unvisited
That tessellate the unseen, unthought star,—
To be the thing that now I feebly dream,
Flashing within my faintest, deepest gleam.

Ah! caverns of my soul! how thick your shade,
Where flows that life by which I faintly see:—
Wave your bright torches, for I need your aid,
Golden-eyed demons of my ancestry!
Your son though blinded hath a light within,
A heavenly fire which ye from suns did win.

And, lady, in thy hope my life will rise
Like the air-voyager, till I upbear
These heavy curtains of my filmy eyes
Into a lighter, more celestial air:
A mortal's hope shall bear me safely on,
Till I the higher region shall have won.

O Time! O Death! I clasp you in my arms,
For I can soothe an infinite cold sorrow,
And gaze contented on your icy charms
And that wild snow-pile which we call to-morrow;
Sweep on, O soft and azure-lidded sky,
Earth's waters to your gentle gaze reply.

I am not earth-born, though I here delay;
Hope's child, I summon infiniter powers,
And laugh to see the mild and sunny day
Smile on the shrunk and thin autumnal hours;
I laugh, for hope hath happy place with me,—
If my bark sinks, 'tis to another sea.

JULIA WARD HOWE (1819-1910)

BATTLE-HYMN OF THE REPUBLIC

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord:
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored;
He hath loosed the fateful lightning of his terrible swift sword:
His truth is marching on.

I have seen Him in the watch-fires of a hundred circling camps;
They have builded Him an altar in the evening dews and damps;
I can read His righteous sentence by the dim and flaring lamps.
His day is marching on.

I have read a fiery gospel, writ in burnished rows of steel:
"As ye deal with my contemners, so with you my grace shall deal;
Let the Hero, born of woman, crush the serpent with his heel,
Since God is marching on."

He has sounded forth the trumpet that shall never call retreat;
He is sifting out the hearts of men before his judgment-seat:
Oh! be swift, my soul, to answer Him! be jubilant, my feet!
Our God is marching on.

Julia Ward Howe

In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across the sea,
With a glory in his bosom that transfigures you and me:
As he died to make men holy, let us die to make men free,
While God is marching on.

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL (1819-1891)

THE COMMEMORATION ODE

I

Weak-winged is song,
Nor aims at that clear-ethered height
Whither the brave deed climbs for light:
We seem to do them wrong,
Bringing our robin's-leaf to deck their hearse
Who in warm life-blood wrote their nobler verse,
Our trivial song to honor those who come
With ears attuned to strenuous trump and drum,
And shaped in squadron-strophes their desire,
Live battle-odes whose lines were steel and fire:
Yet sometimes feathered words are strong,
A gracious memory to buoy up and save
From Lethe's dreamless ooze, the common grave
Of the unventurous throng.

II

To-day our Reverend Mother welcomes back
Her wisest Scholars, those who understood
The deeper teaching of her mystic tome,
And offered their fresh lives to make it good:
No lore of Greece or Rome,
No science peddling with the names of things,
Or reading stars to find inglorious fates,
Can lift our life with wings
Far from Death's idle gulf that for the many waits
And lengthen out our dates

With that clear fame whose memory sings
In manly hearts to come, and nerves them and dilates:
Nor such thy teaching, Mother of us all!
  Not such the trumpet-call
  Of thy diviner mood,
  That could thy sons entice
From happy homes and toils, the fruitful nest
Of those half-virtues which the world calls best,
  Into War's tumult rude;
  But rather far that stern device
The sponsors chose that round thy cradle stood
  In the dim, unventured wood,
  The VERITAS that lurks beneath
  The letter's unprolific sheath,
Life of whate'er makes life worth living,
Seed-grain of high emprise, immortal food,
One heavenly thing whereof earth hath the giving.

III

  Many loved Truth, and lavished life's best oil
    Amid the dust of books to find her,
  Content at last, for guerdon of their toil,
    With the cast mantle she hath left behind her.
      Many in sad faith sought for her,
      Many with crossed hands sighed for her,
      But these, our brothers, fought for her,
      At life's dear peril wrought for her,
      So loved her that they died for her,
      Tasting the raptured fleetness
      Of her divine completeness:
        Their higher instinct knew
  Those love her best who to themselves are true,
  And what they dare to dream of, dare to do;
      They followed her and found her
      Where all may hope to find,
  Not in the ashes of the burnt-out mind,
  But beautiful, with danger's sweetness round her.

Where faith made whole with deed
Breathes its awakening breath
Into the lifeless creed,
They saw her plumed and mailed,
With sweet, stern face unveiled,
And all-repaying eyes, look proud on them in death.

IV

Our slender life runs rippling by, and glides
Into the silent hollow of the past;
What is there that abides
To make the next age better for the last?
Is earth too poor to give us
Something to live for here that shall outlive us?
Some more substantial boon
Than such as flows and ebbs with Fortune's fickle moon?
The little that we see
From doubt is never free;
The little that we do
Is but half-nobly true;
With our laborious hiving
What men call treasure, and the gods call dross,
Life seems a jest of Fate's contriving,
Only secure in every one's conniving,
A long account of nothings paid with loss,
Where we poor puppets, jerked by unseen wires,
After our little hour of strut and rave,
With all our pasteboard passions and desires,
Loves, hates, ambitions, and immortal fires,
Are tossed pell-mell together in the grave.
But stay! no age was e'er degenerate,
Unless men held it at too cheap a rate,
For in our likeness still we shape our fate.
Ah, there is something here
Unfathomed by the cynic's sneer,
Something that gives our feeble light
A high immunity from Night,

Something that leaps life's narrow bars
To claim its birthright with the hosts of heaven;
A seed of sunshine that can leaven
Our earthly dullness with the beams of stars,
And glorify our clay
With light from fountains elder than the Day;
A conscience more divine than we,
A gladness fed with secret tears,
A vexing, forward-reaching sense
Of some more noble permanence;
A light across the sea,
Which haunts the soul and will not let it be,
Still beaconing from the heights of undegenerate years.

V

Whither leads the path
To ampler fates that leads?
Not down through flowery meads,
To reap an aftermath
Of youth's vainglorious weeds,
But up the steep, amid the wrath
And shock of deadly-hostile creeds,
Where the world's best hope and stay
By battle's flashes gropes a desperate way,
And every turf the fierce foot clings to bleeds.
Peace hath her not ignoble wreath,
Ere yet the sharp, decisive word
Light the black lips of cannon, and the sword
Dreams in its easeful sheath;
But some day the live coal behind the thought,
Whether from Baäl's stone obscene,
Or from the shrine serene
Of God's pure altar brought,
Bursts up in flame; the war of tongue and pen
Learns with what deadly purpose it was fraught,
And, helpless in the fiery passion caught,
Shakes all the pillared state with shock of men:

Some day the soft Ideal that we wooed
Confronts us fiercely, foe-beset, pursued,
And cries reproachful: "Was it, then, my praise,
And not myself was loved? Prove now thy truth;
I claim of thee the promise of thy youth;
Give me thy life, or cower in empty phrase,
The victim of thy genius, not its mate!"
  Life may be given in many ways,
  And loyalty to Truth be sealed
As bravely in the closet as the field,
    So bountiful is Fate;
    But then to stand beside her,
    When craven churls deride her,
To front a lie in arms and not to yield,
    This shows, methinks, God's plan
    And measure of a stalwart man,
    Limbed like the old heroic breeds,
Who stand self-poised on manhood's solid earth,
Not forced to frame excuses for his birth,
Fed from within with all the strength he needs.

VI

    Such was he, our Martyr-Chief,
    Whom late the Nation he had led,
    With ashes on her head,
Wept with the passion of an angry grief:
Forgive me, if from present things I turn
To speak what in my heart will beat and burn,
And hang my wreath on his world-honored urn.
    Nature, they say, doth dote,
    And cannot make a man
    Save on some worn-out plan,
    Repeating us by rote:
For him her Old-World moulds aside she threw,
And, choosing sweet clay from the breast
    Of the unexhausted West,
With stuff untainted shaped a hero new,

Wise, steadfast in the strength of God, and true.
How beautiful to see
Once more a shepherd of mankind indeed,
Who loved his charge, but never loved to lead;
One whose meek flock the people joyed to be,
Not lured by any cheat of birth,
But by his clear-grained human worth,
And brave old wisdom of sincerity!
They knew that outward grace is dust;
They could not choose but trust
In that sure-footed mind's unfaltering skill,
And supple-tempered will
That bent like perfect steel to spring again and thrust.
His was no lonely mountain-peak of mind,
Thrusting to thin air o'er our cloudy bars,
A sea-mark now, now lost in vapor's blind;
Broad prairie rather, genial, level-lined,
Fruitful and friendly for all human kind,
Yet also nigh to heaven and loved of loftiest stars.
Nothing of Europe here,
Or, then, of Europe fronting mornward still,
Ere any names of Serf and Peer
Could Nature's equal scheme deface
And thwart her genial will;
Here was a type of the true elder race,
And one of Plutarch's men talked with us face to face.
I praise him not; it were too late;
And some innative weakness there must be
In him who condescends to victory
Such as the Present gives, and cannot wait,
Safe in himself as in a fate.
So always firmly he:
He knew to bide his time,
And can his fame abide,
Still patient in his simple faith sublime,
Till the wise years decide.

Great captains, with their guns and drums,
Disturb our judgment for the hour,
But at last silence comes;
These all are gone, and, standing like a tower,
Our children shall behold his fame,
The kindly-earnest, brave, foreseeing man,
Sagacious, patient, dreading praise, not blame,
New birth of our new soil, the first American.

VII

Long as man's hope insatiate can discern
Or only guess some more inspiring goal
Outside of Self, enduring as the pole,
Along whose course the flying axles burn
Of spirits bravely-pitched, earth's manlier brood;
Long as below we cannot find
The meed that stills the inexorable mind;
So long this faith to some ideal Good,
Under whatever mortal names it masks,
Freedom, Law, Country, this ethereal mood
That thanks the Fates for their severer tasks,
Feeling its challenged pulses leap,
While others skulk in subterfuges cheap,
And, set in Danger's van, has all the boon it asks,
Shall win man's praise and woman's love,
Shall be a wisdom that we set above
All other skills and gifts to culture dear,
A virtue round whose forehead we inwreathe
Laurels that with a living passion breathe
When other crowns grow, while we twine them, sere.
What brings us thronging these high rites to pay,
And seal these hours the noblest of our year,
Save that our brothers found this better way?

VIII

We sit here in the Promised Land
That flows with Freedom's honey and milk;
But 'twas they won it, sword in hand,
Making the nettle danger soft for us as silk.
We welcome back our bravest and our best;—
Ah me! not all! some come not with the rest,
Who went forth brave and bright as any here!
I strive to mix some gladness with my strain,
But the sad strings complain,
And will not please the ear:
I sweep them for a pæan, but they wane
Again and yet again
Into a dirge, and die away, in pain.
In these brave ranks I only see the gaps,
Thinking of dear ones whom the dumb turf wraps,
Dark to the triumph which they died to gain:
Fitlier may others greet the living,
For me the past is unforgiving;
I with uncovered head
Salute the sacred dead,
Who went, and who return not.—Say not so!
'Tis not the grapes of Canaan that repay,
But the high faith that failed not by the way;
Virtue treads paths that end not in the grave;
No bar of endless night exiles the brave;
And to the saner mind
We rather seem the dead that stayed behind.
Blow, trumpets, all your exultations blow!
For never shall their aureoled presence lack:
I see them muster in a gleaming row,
With ever-youthful brows that nobler show;
We find in our dull road their shining track;
In every nobler mood
We feel the orient of their spirit glow,
Part of our life's unalterable good,

Of all our saintlier aspiration;
They come transfigured back,
Secure from change in their high-hearted ways,
Beautiful evermore, and with the rays
Of morn on their white Shields of Expectation!

IX

But is there hope to save
Even this ethereal essence from the grave?
Whatever 'scaped Oblivion's subtle wrong
Save a few clarion names, or golden threads of song?
Before my musing eye
The mighty ones of old sweep by,
Disvoicëd now and insubstantial things,
As noisy once as we; poor ghosts of kings,
Shadows of empire wholly gone to dust,
And many races, nameless long ago,
To darkness driven by that imperious gust
Of ever-rushing Time that here doth blow:
O visionary world, condition strange,
Where naught abiding is but only Change,
Where the deep-bolted stars themselves still shift and range!
Shall we to more continuance make pretence?
Renown builds tombs; a life-estate is Wit;
And, bit by bit,
The cunning years steal all from us but woe;
Leaves are we, whose decays no harvest sow.
But, when we vanish hence,
Shall they lie forceless in the dark below,
Save to make green their little length of sods,
Or deepen pansies for a year or two,
Who now to us are shining-sweet as gods?
Was dying all they had the skill to do?
That were not fruitless: but the Soul resents
Such short-lived service, as if blind events
Ruled without her, or earth could so endure;
She claims a more divine investiture

Of longer tenure than Fame's airy rents;
Whate'er she touches doth her nature share;
Her inspiration haunts the ennobled air,
Gives eyes to mountains blind,
Ears to the deaf earth, voices to the wind,
And her clear trump sings succor everywhere
By lonely bivouacs to the wakeful mind;
For soul inherits all that soul could dare:
Yea, Manhood hath a wider span
And larger privilege of life than man.
The single deed, the private sacrifice,
So radiant now through proudly-hidden tears,
Is covered up erelong from mortal eyes
With thoughtless drift of the deciduous years;
But that high privilege that makes all men peers,
That leap of heart whereby a people rise
Up to a noble anger's height,
And, flamed on by the Fates, not shrink, but grow more bright,
That swift validity in noble veins,
Of choosing danger and disdaining shame,
Of being set on flame
By the pure fire that flies all contact base
But wraps its chosen with angelic might,
These are imperishable gains,
Sure as the sun, medicinal as light,
These hold great futures in their lusty reins
And certify to earth a new imperial race.

X

Who now shall sneer?
Who dare again to say we trace
Our lines to a plebeian race?
Roundhead and Cavalier!
Dumb are those names erewhile in battle loud;
Dream-footed as the shadow of a cloud,
They flit across the ear:

That is best blood that hath most iron in't
To edge resolve with, pouring without stint
For what makes manhood dear.
Tell us not of Plantagenets,
Hapsburgs, and Guelfs, whose thin bloods crawl
Down from some victor in a border-brawl!
How poor their outworn coronets,
Matched with one leaf of that plain civic wreath
Our brave for honor's blazon shall bequeath,
Through whose desert a rescued Nation sets
Her heel on treason, and the trumpet hears
Shout victory, tingling Europe's sullen ears
With vain resentments and more vain regrets!

XI

Not in anger, not in pride,
Pure from passion's mixture rude
Ever to base earth allied,
But with far-heard gratitude,
Still with heart and voice renewed,
To heroes living and dear martyrs dead,
The strain should close that consecrates our brave.
Lift the heart and lift the head!
Lofty be its mood and grave,
Not without a martial ring,
Not without a prouder tread
And a peal of exultation:
Little right has he to sing
Through whose heart in such an hour
Beats no march of conscious power,
Sweeps no tumult of elation!
'Tis no Man we celebrate,
By his country's victories great,
A hero half, and half the whim of Fate,
But the pith and marrow of a Nation
Drawing forth from all her men,
Highest, humblest, weakest, all,

For her time of need, and then
Pulsing it again through them,
Till the basest can no longer cower,
Feeling his soul spring up divinely tall,
Touched but in passing by her mantle-hem.
Come back, then, noble pride, for 'tis her dower!
How could poet ever tower,
If his passions, hopes, and fears,
If his triumphs and his tears,
Kept not measure with his people?
Boom, cannon, boom to all the winds and waves!
Clash out, glad bells, from every rocking steeple!
Banners, a-dance with triumph, bend your staves!
And from every mountain-peak
Let beacon-fire to answering beacon speak,
Katahdin tell Monadnock, Whiteface he,
And so leap on in light from sea to sea,
Till the glad news be sent
Across a kindling continent,
Making earth feel more firm and air breathe braves:
"Be proud! for she is saved, and all have helped to save her!
She that lifts up the manhood of the poor,
She of the open soul and open door,
With room about her hearth for all mankind!
The fire is dreadful in her eyes no more;
From her bold front the helm she doth unbind,
Sends all her handmaid armies back to spin,
And bids her navies, that so lately hurled
Their crashing battle, hold their thunders in,
Swimming like birds of calm along the unharmful shore.
No challenge sends she to the elder world,
That looked askance and hated; a light scorn
Plays o'er her mouth, as round her mighty knees
She calls her children back, and waits the morn
Of nobler day, enthroned between her subject seas."

XII

Bow down, dear Land, for thou hast found release!
Thy God, in these distempered days,
Hath taught thee the sure wisdom of His ways,
And through thine enemies hath wrought thy peace!
Bow down in prayer and praise!
No poorest in thy borders but may now
Lift to the juster skies a man's enfranchised brow.
O Beautiful! my Country! ours once more!
Smoothing thy gold of war-dishevelled hair
O'er such sweet brows as never other wore,
And letting thy set lips,
Freed from wrath's pale eclipse,
The rosy edges of their smile lay bare,
What words divine of lover or of poet
Could tell our love and make thee know it,
Among the Nations bright beyond compare?
What were our lives without thee?
What all our lives to save thee?
We reck not what we gave thee;
We will not dare to doubt thee,
But ask whatever else, and we will dare!

HERMAN MELVILLE (1819-1891)

THE ENVIABLE ISLES

Through storms you reach them and from storms are free.
Afar descried, the foremost drear in hue,
But, nearer, green; and, on the marge, the sea
Makes thunder low and mist of rainbowed dew.

But, inland,—where the sleep that folds the hills
A dreamier sleep, the trance of God, instils—

On uplands hazed, in wandering airs aswoon,
Slow-swaying palms salute love's cypress tree
Adown in vale where pebbly runlets croon
A song to lull all sorrow and all glee.

Sweet-fern and moss in many a glade are here,
Where, strown in flocks, what cheek-flushed myriads lie
Dimpling in dream, unconscious slumberers mere,
While billows endless round the beaches die.

EPILOGUE

If Luther's day expand to Darwin's year,
Shall that exclude the hope—foreclose the fear?

Unmoved by all the claims our times avow,
The ancient Sphinx still keeps the porch of shade;
And comes Despair, whom not her calm may cow,
And coldly on that adamantine brow
Scrawls undeterred his bitter pasquinade.
But Faith (who from the scrawl indignant turns)
With blood warm oozing from her wounded trust,
Inscribes even on her shards of broken urns
The sign o' the cross—*the spirit above the dust!*

Yea, ape and angel, strife and old debate—
The harps of heaven and dreary gongs of hell;
Science the feud can only aggravate—
No umpire she betwixt the chimes and knell:
The running battle of the star and clod
Shall run forever—if there be no God.
Degrees we know, unknown in days before;
The light is greater, hence the shadow more;
And tantalized and apprehensive Man
Appealing— Wherefore ripen us to pain?
Seems there the spokesman of dumb Nature's train.

But through such strange illusions have they passed
Who in life's pilgrimage have baffled striven—
Even death may prove unreal at the last,
And stoics be astounded into heaven.

Then keep thy heart, though yet but ill-resigned—
Clarel, thy heart, the issues there but mind;
That like the crocus budding through the snow—
That like a swimmer rising from the deep—
That like a burning secret which doth go
Even from the bosom that would hoard and keep;
Emerge thou mayst from the last whelming sea,
And prove that death but routs life into victory.

THOMAS WILLIAM PARSONS
(1819-1892)

ON A BUST OF DANTE

See, from this counterfeit of him
Whom Arno shall remember long,
How stern of lineament, how grim,
The father was of Tuscan song:
There but the burning sense of wrong,
Perpetual care and scorn, abide;
Small friendship for the lordly throng;
Distrust of all the world beside.

Faithful if this wan image be,
No dream his life was,—but a fight!
Could any Beatrice see
A lover in that anchorite?
To that cold Ghibelline's gloomy sight
Who could have guessed the visions came
Of Beauty, veiled with heavenly light,
In circles of eternal flame?

The lips as Cumae's cavern close,
The cheeks with fast and sorrow thin;
The rigid front, almost morose,
But for the patient hope within,
Declare a life whose course hath been
Unsullied still, though still severe,
Which, through the wavering days of sin,
Kept itself icy-chaste and clear.

Not wholly such his haggard look
When wandering once, forlorn, he strayed,
With no companion save his book,
To Corvo's hushed monastic shade;
Where, as the Benedictine laid
His palm upon the convent's guest,
The single boon for which he prayed
Was peace, that pilgrim's one request.

Peace dwells not here,—this rugged face
Betrays no spirit of repose;
The sullen warrior sole we trace,
The marble man of many woes.
Such was his mien when first arose
The thought of that strange tale divine,
When hell he peopled with his foes,
Dread scourge of many a guilty line.

War to the last he waged with all
The tyrant canker-worms of earth;
Baron and duke, in hold and hall,
Cursed the dark hour that gave him birth;
He used Rome's harlot for his mirth;
Plucked bare hypocrisy and crime;
But valiant souls of knightly worth
Transmitted to the rolls of Time.

Thomas William Parsons

O Time! whose verdicts mock our own,
The only righteous judge art thou;
That poor old exile, sad and lone,
Is Latium's other Virgil now:
Before his name the nations bow;
His words are parcel of mankind,
Deep in whose hearts, as on his brow,
The marks have sunk of Dante's mind.

WALT WHITMAN (1819-1892)

ONE'S-SELF I SING

One's-self I sing, a simple separate person,
Yet utter the word Democratic, the word En-Masse.

Of physiology from top to toe I sing,
Not physiognomy alone nor brain alone is worthy for the Muse,
I say the Form complete is worthier far,
The Female equally with the Male I sing.

Of Life immense in passion, pulse, and power,
Cheerful, for freest action form'd under the laws divine,
The Modern Man I sing.

POETS TO COME

Poets to come! orators, singers, musicians to come!
Not to-day is to justify me and answer what I am for,
But you, a new brood, native, athletic, continental, greater than before known,
Arouse! for you must justify me.
I myself but write one or two indicative words for the future,
I but advance a moment only to wheel and hurry back in the darkness.

I am a man who, sauntering along without fully stopping, turns
a casual look upon you and then averts his face,
Leaving it to you to prove and define it,
Expecting the main things from you.

ONE HOUR TO MADNESS AND JOY

One hour to madness and joy! O furious! O confine me not!
(What is this that frees me so in storms?
What do my shouts amid lightnings and raging winds mean?)

O to drink the mystic deliria deeper than any other man!
O savage and tender achings! (I bequeath them to you my children,
I tell them to you, for reasons, O bridegroom and bride.)

O to be yielded to you whoever you are, and you to be yielded to me in defiance of the world!
O to return to Paradise! O bashful and feminine!
O to draw you to me, to plant on you for the first time the lips of a determin'd man.

O the puzzle, the thrice-tied knot, the deep and dark pool, all untied and illumin'd!
O to speed where there is space enough and air enough at last!
To be absolv'd from previous ties and conventions, I from mine and you from yours!
To find a new unthought-of nonchalance with the best of Nature!
To have the gag remov'd from one's mouth!
To have the feeling to-day or any day I am sufficient as I am.

O something unprov'd! something in a trance!
To escape utterly from others' anchors and holds!
To drive free! to love free! to dash reckless and dangerous!
To court destruction with taunts, with invitations!
To ascend, to leap to the heavens of the love indicated to me!

To rise thither with my inebriate soul!
To be lost if it must be so!
To feed the remainder of life with one hour of fulness and freedom!
With one brief hour of madness and joy.

YOUTH, DAY, OLD AGE, AND NIGHT

Youth, large, lusty, loving—youth full of grace, force, fascination,
Do you know that Old Age may come after you with equal grace, force, fascination?

Day full-blown and splendid—day of the immense sun, action, ambition, laughter,
The Night follows close with millions of suns, and sleep and restoring darkness.

TO A COMMON PROSTITUTE

Be composed—be at ease with me—I am Walt Whitman, liberal and lusty as Nature,
Not till the sun excludes you do I exclude you,
Not till the waters refuse to glisten for you and the leaves to rustle for you, do my words refuse to glisten and rustle for you.

My girl, I appoint with you an appointment, and I charge you that you make preparation to be worthy to meet me,
And I charge you that you be patient and perfect till I come.

Till then I salute you with a significant look that you do not forget me.

OUT OF THE CRADLE ENDLESSLY ROCKING

Out of the cradle endlessly rocking,
Out of the mocking-bird's throat, the musical shuttle,

Out of the Ninth-month midnight,
Over the sterile sands, and the fields beyond, where the child
leaving his bed wander'd alone, bareheaded, barefoot,
Down from the shower'd halo,
Up from the mystic play of shadows twining and twisting as if
they were alive,
Out from the patches of briers and blackberries,
From the memories of the bird that chanted to me,
From your memories, sad brother, from the fitful risings and
fallings I heard,
From under that yellow half-moon late-risen and swollen as if
with tears,
From those beginning notes of yearning and love there in the mist,
From the thousand responses of my heart never to cease,
From the myriad thence-arous'd words,
From the word stronger and more delicious than any,
From such as now they start the scene revisiting,
As a flock, twittering, rising, or overhead passing,
Borne hither, ere all eludes me, hurriedly,
A man, yet by these tears a little boy again,
Throwing myself on the sand, confronting the waves,
I, chanter of pains and joys, uniter of here and hereafter,
Taking all hints to use them, but swiftly leaping beyond them,
A reminiscence sing.

Once Paumanok,
When the lilac-scent was in the air and Fifth-month grass was
growing,
Up this seashore in some briers,
Two feather'd guests from Alabama, two together,
And their nest, and four light-green eggs spotted with brown,
And every day the he-bird to and fro near at hand,
And every day the she-bird crouch'd in her nest, silent, with
bright eyes,
And every day I, a curious boy, never too close, never disturb-
ing them,
Cautiously peering, absorbing, translating.

Shine! shine! shine!
Pour down your warmth, great sun!
While we bask, we two together.

Two together!
Winds blow south, or winds blow north,
Day come white, or night come black,
Home, or rivers and mountains from home,
Singing all time, minding no time,
While we two keep together.

Till of a sudden,
May-be kill'd, unknown to her mate,
One forenoon the she-bird crouch'd not on the nest,
Nor return'd that afternoon, nor the next,
Nor ever appear'd again.

And thenceforward all summer in the sound of the sea,
And at night under the full of the moon in calmer weather,
Over the hoarse surging of the sea,
Or flitting from brier to brier by day,
I saw, I heard at intervals the remaining one, the he-bird,
The solitary guest from Alabama.

Blow! Blow! Blow!
Blow up sea-winds along Paumanok's shore;
I wait and I wait till you blow my mate to me.

Yes, when the stars glisten'd,
All night long on the prong of a moss-scallop'd stake,
Down almost amid the slapping waves,
Sat the lone singer wonderful causing tears.

He call'd on his mate,
He pour'd forth the meanings which I of all men know.
Yes, my brother, I know,
The rest might not, but I have treasur'd every note,

For more than once dimly down to the beach gliding,
Silent, avoiding the moonbeams, blending myself with the shadows,
Recalling now the obscure shapes, the echoes, the sounds and sights after their sorts,
The white arms out in the breakers tirelessly tossing,
I, with bare feet, a child, the wind wafting my hair,
Listen'd long and long.

Listen'd to keep, to sing, now translating the notes,
Following you, my brother.

Soothe! soothe! soothe!
Close on its waves soothes the wave behind,
And again another behind embracing and lapping, every one close,
But my love soothes not me, not me.

Low hangs the moon, it rose late,
It is lagging—O I think it is heavy with love, with love.

O madly the sea pushes upon the land,
With love, with love.

O night! do I not see my love fluttering out among the breakers?
What is that little black thing I see there in the white?

Loud! loud! loud!
Loud I call to you, my love!
High and clear I shoot my voice over the waves,
Surely you must know who is here, is here,
You must know who I am, my love.

Low-hanging moon!
What is that dusky spot in your brown yellow?
O it is the shape, the shape of my mate!
O moon, do not keep her from me any longer.

Land! land! O land!
Whichever way I turn, O I think you could give me my mate back again if you only would,
For I am almost sure I see her dimly whichever way I look.

O rising stars!
Perhaps the one I want so much will rise, will rise with some of you.

O throat! O trembling throat!
Sound clearer through the atmosphere!
Pierce the woods, the earth,
Somewhere listening to catch you must be the one I want.

Shake out carols!
Solitary here, the night's carols!
Carols of lonesome love! death's carols!
Carols under that lagging, yellow, waning moon!
O under that moon where she droops almost down into the sea!
O reckless despairing carols.

But soft! sink low!
Soft! let me just murmur,
And do you wait a moment you husky-nois'd sea,
For somewhere I believe I heard my mate responding to me,
So faint, I must be still, be still to listen,
But not altogether still, for then she might not come immediately to me.

Hither, my love!
Here I am! here!
With this just-sustain'd note I announce myself to you,
This gentle call is for you, my love, for you.

Do not be decoy'd elsewhere,
That is the whistle of the wind, it is not my voice,
That is the fluttering, the fluttering of the spray,
Those are the shadows of leaves.

O darkness! O in vain!
O I am very sick and sorrowful.

O brown halo in the sky near the moon, drooping upon the sea!
O troubled reflection in the sea!
O throat! O throbbing heart!
And I singing uselessly, uselessly all the night.

O past! O happy life! O songs of joy!
In the air, in the woods, over fields,

Loved! loved! loved! loved! loved!
But my mate no more, no more with me!
We two together no more.

The aria sinking,
All else continuing, the stars shining,
The winds blowing, the notes of the bird continuous echoing,
With angry moans the fierce old mother incessantly moaning,
On the sand of Paumanok's shore grey and rustling,
The yellow half-moon enlarged, sagging down, drooping, the face of the sea almost touching,
The boy ecstatic, with his bare feet the waves, with his hair the atmosphere dallying,
The love in the heart long pent, now loose, now at last tumultuously bursting,
The aria's meaning, the ears, the soul, swiftly depositing,
The strange tears down the cheeks coursing,
The colloquy there, the trio, each uttering,
The undertone, the savage old mother incessantly crying,
To the boy's soul's questions sullenly timing, some drown'd secret hissing,
To the outsetting bard.

Demon or bird! (said the boy's soul),
Is it indeed toward your mate you sing? or is it really to me?
For I, that was a child, my tongue's use sleeping, now I have heard you,

Now in a moment I know what I am for, I awake,
And already a thousand singers, a thousand songs, clearer, louder, and more sorrowful than yours,
A thousand warbling echoes have started to life within me, never to die.

O you singer solitary, singing by yourself, projecting me,
O solitary me listening, never more shall I cease perpetuating you,
Never more shall I escape, never more the reverberations,
Never more the cries of unsatisfied love be absent from me,
Never again leave me to be the peaceful child I was before what there in the night,
By the sea under the yellow and sagging moon,
The messenger there arous'd, the fire, the sweet hell within,
The unknown want, the destiny of me.
O give me the clew! (it lurks in the night here somewhere),
O if I am to have so much, let me have more!

A word then (for I will conquer it),
The word final, superior to all,
Subtle, sent up—what is it?—I listen;
Are you whispering it, and have been all the time, you sea-waves?
Is that it from your liquid rims and wet sands?

Whereto answering, the sea,
Delaying not, hurrying not,
Whisper'd me through the night, and very plainly before day-break,
Lisp'd to me the low and delicious word death,
And again death, death, death, death,
Hissing melodious, neither like the bird nor like my arous'd child's heart,
But edging near as privately for me rustling at my feet,
Creeping thence steadily up to my ears and laving me softly all over,
Death, death, death, death, death.

Which I do not forget,
But fuse the song of my dusky demon and brother,
That he sang to me in the moonlight on Paumanok's grey beach,
With the thousand responsive songs at random,
My own songs awaked from that hour,
And with them the key, the word up from the waves,
The word of the sweetest song and all songs,
That strong and delicious word which, creeping to my feet,
(Or like some old crone rocking the cradle, swathed in sweet garments, bending aside),
The sea whisper'd me.

TEARS

Tears! tears! tears!
In the night, in solitude, tears,
On the white shore dripping, dripping, suck'd in by the sand,
Tears, not a star shining, all dark and desolate,
Moist tears from the eyes of a muffled head;
O who is that ghost? that form in the dark, with tears?
What shapeless lump is that, bent, crouch'd there on the sand?
Streaming tears, sobbing tears, throes, choked with wild cries;
O storm, embodied, rising, careering with swift steps along the beach!
O wild and dismal night storm, with wind— O belching and desperate!
O shade so sedate and decorous by day, with calm countenance and regulated pace,
But away at night as you fly, none looking—O then the unloosen'd ocean,
Of tears! tears! tears!

GODS

Lover divine and perfect Comrade,
Waiting content, invisible yet, but certain,
Be thou my God.

Thou, thou, the Ideal Man,
Fair, able, beautiful, content, and loving,
Complete in body and dilate in spirit,
Be thou my God.

O Death (for Life has served its turn),
Opener and usher to the heavenly mansion,
Be thou my God.

Aught, aught of mightiest, best I see, conceive, or know,
(To break the stagnant tie—thee, thee to free, O soul),
Be thou my God.

All great ideas, the races' aspirations,
All heroisms, deeds of rapt enthusiasts,
Be ye my Gods.

Or Time and Space,
Or shape of Earth divine and wondrous,
Or some fair shape I viewing, worship,
Or lustrous orb of sun or star by night,
Be ye my Gods.

TO RICH GIVERS

What you give me I cheerfully accept,
A little sustenance, a hut and garden, a little money, as I rendezvous with my poems,
A traveller's lodging and breakfast as I journey through the States—why should I be ashamed to own such gifts? why to advertise for them?
For I myself am not one who bestows nothing upon man and woman,
For I bestow upon any man or woman the entrance to all the gifts of the universe.

RECONCILIATION

Word over all, beautiful as the sky,
Beautiful that war and all its deeds of carnage must in time be utterly lost,
That the hands of the sisters Death and Night incessantly softly wash again, and ever again, this soil'd world;
For my enemy is dead, a man divine as myself is dead,
I look where he lies white-faced and still in the coffin—I draw near,
Bend down and touch lightly with my lips the white face in the coffin.

WHEN LILACS LAST IN THE DOORYARD BLOOM'D

I

When lilacs last in the dooryard bloom'd,
And the great star early droop'd in the western sky in the night,
I mourn'd, and yet shall mourn with ever-returning spring.

Ever-returning spring, trinity sure to me you bring,
Lilac blooming perennial and drooping star in the west,
And thought of him I love.

II

O powerful western fallen star!
O shades of night—O moody, tearful night!
O great star disappear'd—O the black murk that hides the star!
O cruel hands that hold me powerless—O helpless soul of me!
O harsh surrounding cloud that will not free my soul.

III

In the dooryard fronting an old farm-house near the white-wash'd palings,
Stands the lilac-bush tall-growing with heart-shaped leaves of rich green,

With many a pointed blossom rising delicate, with the perfume strong I love,
With every leaf a miracle—and from this bush in the door-yard,
With delicate-colour'd blossoms and heart-shaped leaves of rich green,
A sprig with its flower I break.

IV

In the swamp in secluded recesses,
A shy and hidden bird is warbling a song.
Solitary the thrush,
The hermit withdrawn to himself, avoiding the settlements,
Sings by himself a song.

Song of the bleeding throat,
Death's outlet song of life (for well, dear brother, I know,
If thou wast not granted to sing thou would'st surely die).

V

Over the breast of the spring, the land, amid cities,
Amid lanes and through old woods, where lately the violets peep'd from the ground, spotting the grey débris,
Amid the grass in the fields each side of the lanes, passing the endless grass,
Passing the yellow-spear'd wheat, every grain from its shroud in the dark-brown fields uprisen,
Passing the apple-tree blows of white and pink in the orchards,
Carrying a corpse to where it shall rest in the grave,
Night and day journeys a coffin.

VI

Coffin that passes through lanes and streets,
Through day and night with the great cloud darkening the land,
With the pomp of the inloop'd flags with the cities draped in black,

With the show of the States themselves as of crape-veil'd women standing,
With processions long and winding and the flambeaus of the night,
With the countless torches lit, with the silent sea of faces and the unbared heads,
With the waiting depôt, the arriving coffin, and the sombre faces,
With dirges through the night, with the shout and voices rising strong and solemn,
With all the mournful voices of the dirges pour'd around the coffin,
The dim-lit churches and the shuddering organs—where amid these you journey,
With the tolling, tolling bells' perpetual clang,
Here, coffin that slowly passes,
I give you my sprig of lilac.

VII

(Not for you, for one alone,
Blossoms and branches green to coffins all I bring,
For fresh as the morning, thus would I chant a song for you, O sane and sacred death.

All over bouquets of roses,
O death, I cover you over with roses and early lilies,
But mostly and now the lilac that blooms the first,
Copious I break, I break the sprigs from the bushes,
With loaded arms I come, pouring for you,
For you and the coffins all of you, O death.)

VIII

O western orb, sailing the heaven,
Now I know what you must have meant as a month since I walk'd,
As I walk'd in silence the transparent shadowy night,

As I saw you had something to tell as you bent to me night after night,
As you droop'd from the sky low down as if to my side (while the other stars all look'd on),
As we wander'd together the solemn night (for something I know not what kept me from sleep),
As the night advanced, and I saw on the rim of the west how full you were of woe,
As I stood on the rising ground in the breeze in the cool transparent night,
As I watched where you pass'd and was lost in the netherward black of the night,
As my soul in its trouble dissatisfied sank, as where you, sad orb,
Concluded, dropt in the night, and was gone.

IX

Sing on there in the swamp,
O singer, bashful and tender, I hear your notes, I hear your call,
I hear, I come presently, I understand you,
But a moment I linger, for the lustrous star has detain'd me,
The star my departing comrade holds and detains me.

X

O how shall I warble myself for the dead one there I loved?
And how shall I deck my song for the large sweet soul that has gone?
And what shall my perfume be for the grave of him I love?

Sea-winds blown from east and west,
Blown from the Eastern sea and blown from the Western sea, till there on the prairies meeting,
These and with these and the breath of my chant,
I'll perfume the grave of him I love.

XI

O what shall I hang on the chamber walls?
And what shall the pictures be that I hang on the walls,
To adorn the burial-house of him I love?

Pictures of growing spring and farms and homes,
With the Fourth-month eve at sundown, and the grey smoke lucid and bright,
With floods of the yellow gold of the gorgeous, indolent, sinking sun, burning, expanding the air,
With the fresh sweet herbage under foot, and the pale green leaves of the trees prolific,
In the distance the flowing glaze, the breast of the river, with a wind-dapple here and there,
With ranging hills on the banks, with many a line against the sky, and shadows,
And the city at hand with dwellings so dense, and stacks of chimneys,
And all the scenes of life and the workshops, and the workmen homeward returning.

XII

Lo, body and soul—this land,
My own Manhattan with spires, and the sparkling and hurrying tides, and the ships,
The varied and ample land, the South and the North in the light, Ohio's shores and flashing Missouri,
And ever the far-spreading prairies cover'd with grass and corn,
Lo, the most excellent sun so calm and haughty,
The violet and purple morn with just-felt breezes,
The gentle soft-born measureless light,
The miracle spreading bathing all, the fulfill'd noon,
The coming eve delicious, the welcome night and the stars,
Over my cities shining all, enveloping man and land.

XIII

Sing on, sing on, you grey-brown bird,
Sing from the swamps, the recesses, pour your chant from the bushes,
Limitless out of the dusk, out of the cedars and pines.

Sing on, dearest brother, warble your reedy song,
Loud human song, with voice of uttermost woe.

O liquid and free and tender!
O wild and loose to my soul—O wondrous singer!
You only I hear—yet the stars hold me (but will soon depart);
Yet the lilac with mastering odour holds me.

XIV

Now while I sat in the day and look'd forth,
In the close of the day with its light and fields of spring, and the farmers preparing their crops,
In the large unconscious scenery of my land with its lakes and forests,
In the heavenly aerial beauty (after the perturb'd winds and the storms),
Under the arching heavens of the afternoon swift passing, and the voices of children and women,
The many-moving sea-tides, and I saw the ships how they sail'd,
And the summer approaching with richness, and the fields all busy with labour,
And the infinite separate houses, how they all went on, each with its meals and minutia of daily usages,
And the streets how their throbbings throbb'd, and the cities pent—lo, then and there,
Falling upon them all and among them all, enveloping me with the rest,
Appear'd the cloud, appear'd the long black trail,
And I knew death, its thought, and the sacred knowledge of death.

Then with the knowledge of death as walking one side of me,
And the thought of death close-walking the other side of me,
And I in the middle as with companions, and as holding the hands of companions,
I fled forth to the hiding receiving night that talks not,
Down to the shores of the water, the path by the swamp in the dimness,
To the solemn shadowy cedars and ghostly pines so still.

And the singer so shy to the rest receiv'd me,
The grey-brown bird I know receiv'd us comrades three,
And he sang the carol of death, and a verse for him I love.

From deep secluded recesses,
From the fragrant cedars and the ghostly pines so still,
Came the carol of the bird.

And the charm of the carol rapt me,
As I held as if by their hands my comrades in the night,
And the voice of my spirit tallied the song of the bird.

Come lovely and soothing death,
Undulate round the world, serenely arriving, arriving,
In the day, in the night, to all, to each,
Sooner or later delicate death.

Prais'd be the fathomless universe,
For life and joy, and for objects and knowledge curious,
And for love, sweet love—but praise! praise! praise!
For the sure-enwinding arms of cool-enfolding death.
Dark mother always gliding near with soft feet,
Have none chanted for thee a chant of fullest welcome?
Then I chant it for thee, I glorify thee above all,
I bring thee a song that when thou must indeed come, come unfalteringly.

Approach strong deliveress,
When it is so, when thou hast taken them I joyously sing the dead,
Lost in the loving floating ocean of thee,
Laved in the flood of thy bliss, O death.
From me to thee glad serenades,
Dances for thee I propose saluting thee, adornments and feastings for thee,
And the sights of the open landscape and the high-spread sky are fitting,
And life and the fields, and the huge and thoughtful night.

The night in silence under many a star,
The ocean shore and the husky whispering wave whose voice I know,
And the soul turning to thee, O vast and well-veil'd death,
And the body gratefully nestling close to thee.

Over the tree-tops I float thee a song,
Over the rising and sinking waves, over the myriad fields and the prairies wide,
Over the dense-pack'd cities all and the teeming wharves and ways,
I float this carol with joy, with joy to thee, O death.

XV

To the tally of my soul,
Loud and strong kept up the grey-brown bird,
With pure deliberate notes spreading filling the night.

Loud in the pines and cedars dim,
Clear in the freshness moist and the swamp-perfume,
And I with my comrades there in the night.

While my sight that was bound in my eyes unclosed,
As to long panoramas of visions.

And I saw askant the armies,
I saw as in noiseless dreams hundreds of battle-flags,
Borne through the smoke of the battles and pierc'd with missiles I saw them,
And carried hither and yon through the smoke, and torn and bloody,
And at last but a few shreds left on the staffs (and all in silence),
And the staffs all splinter'd and broken.

I saw battle-corpses, myriads of them,
And the white skeletons of young men, I saw them,
I saw the débris and débris of all the slain soldiers of the war,
But I saw they were not as was thought,

They themselves were fully at rest, they suffer'd not,
The living remain'd and suffer'd, the mother suffer'd,
And the wife and the child and the musing comrade suffer'd,
And the armies that remain'd suffer'd.

XVI

Passing the visions, passing the night,
Passing, unloosing the hold of my comrades' hands,
Passing the song of the hermit bird and the tallying song of my soul,
Victorious song, death's outlet song, yet varying ever-altering song,
As low and wailing, yet clear the notes, rising and falling, flooding the night,
Sadly sinking and fainting, as warning and warning, and yet again bursting with joy,
Covering the earth and filling the spread of the heaven,
As that powerful psalm in the night I heard from recesses,
Passing, I leave thee lilac with heart-shaped leaves,
I leave thee there in the door-yard, blooming, returning with spring.

I cease from my song for thee,
From my gaze on thee in the west, fronting the west, communing with thee,
O comrade lustrous with silver face in the night.

Yet each to keep and all, retrievements out of the night,
The song, the wondrous chant of the grey-brown bird,
And the tallying chant, the echo arous'd in my soul,
With the lustrous and drooping star with the countenance full of woe,
With the holders holding my hand nearing the call of the bird,
Comrades mine and I in the midst, and their memory ever to keep, for the dead I loved so well,
For the sweetest, wisest soul of all my days and lands—and this for his dear sake,
Lilac and star and bird twined with the chant of my soul,
There in the fragrant pines and the cedars dusk and dim.

PART THREE

THEODORE O'HARA (1820-1867)

THE BIVOUAC OF THE DEAD

The muffled drum's sad roll has beat
The soldier's last tattoo;
No more on Life's parade shall meet
That brave and fallen few.
On Fame's eternal camping-ground
Their silent tents are spread,
And Glory guards, with solemn round,
The bivouac of the dead.

No rumor of the foe's advance
Now swells upon the wind;
No troubled thought at midnight haunts
Of loved ones left behind;
No vision of the morrow's strife
The warrior's dream alarms;
No braying horn nor screaming fife
At dawn shall call to arms.

Their shivered swords are red with rust,
Their plumëd heads are bowed;
Their haughty banner, trailed in dust,
Is now their martial shroud.
And plenteous funeral tears have washed
The red stains from each brow,
And the proud forms, by battle gashed,
Are free from anguish now.

The neighing troop, the flashing blade,
The bugle's stirring blast,
The charge, the dreadful cannonade,
The din and shout, are past;

Nor war's wild note nor glory's peal
  Shall thrill with fierce delight
Those breasts that nevermore may feel
  The rapture of the fight.

Like the fierce northern hurricane
  That sweeps his great plateau,
Flushed with the triumph yet to gain,
  Came down the serried foe.
Who heard the thunder of the fray
  Break o'er the field beneath,
Knew well the watchword of that day
  Was "Victory or Death."

Long had the doubtful conflict raged
  O'er all that stricken plain,
For never fiercer fight had waged
  The vengeful blood of Spain;
And still the storm of battle blew,
  Still swelled the gory tide;
Not long, our stout old chieftain knew,
  Such odds his strength could bide.

'Twas in that hour his stern command
  Called to a martyr's grave
The flower of his beloved land,
  The nation's flag to save.
By rivers of their fathers' gore
  His first-born laurels grew,
And well he deemed the sons would pour
  Their lives for glory too.

Full many a norther's breath has swept
  O'er Angostura's plain,
And long the pitying sky has wept
  Above its mouldered slain.

The raven's scream, or eagle's flight,
Or shepherd's pensive lay,
Alone awakes each sullen height
That frowned o'er that dread fray.

Sons of the Dark and Bloody Ground,
Ye must not slumber there,
Where stranger steps and tongues resound
Along the heedless air.
Your own proud land's heroic soil
Shall be your fitter grave:
She claims from war his richest spoil—
The ashes of her brave.

Thus 'neath their parent turf they rest,
Far from the gory field,
Borne to a Spartan mother's breast
On many a bloody shield;
The sunshine of their native sky
Smiles sadly on them here,
And kindred eyes and hearts watch by
The heroes' sepulchre.

Rest on, embalmed and sainted dead!
Dear as the blood ye gave;
No impious footstep here shall tread
The herbage of your grave;
Nor shall your glory be forgot
While Fame her record keeps,
Or Honor points the hallowed spot
Where Valor proudly sleeps.

Yon marble minstrel's voiceless stone
In deathless song shall tell,
When many a vanished age hath flown,
The story how ye fell;

Nor wreck, nor change, nor winter's blight,
Nor Time's remorseless doom,
Shall dim one ray of glory's light
That gilds your deathless tomb.

FRANCIS ORRERY TICKNOR
(1822-1874)

THE VIRGINIANS OF THE VALLEY

The knightliest of the knightly race
That, since the days of old,
Have kept the lamp of chivalry
Alight in hearts of gold;
The kindliest of the kindly band
That, rarely hating ease,
Yet rode with Spotswood round the land,
And Raleigh round the seas;

Who climbed the blue Virginian hills
Against embattled foes,
And planted there, in valleys fair,
The lily and the rose;
Whose fragrance lives in many lands,
Whose beauty stars the earth,
And lights the hearths of happy homes
With loveliness and worth.

We thought they slept!—the sons who kept
The names of noble sires,
And slumbered while the darkness crept
Around their vigil fires;
But aye the "Golden Horseshoe" knights
Their old Dominion keep,
Whose foes have found enchanted ground,
But not a knight asleep.

JAMES MATTHEW LEGARÉ
(1823-1859)

TO A LILY

Go bow thy head in gentle spite,
Thou lily white,
For she who spies thee waving here,
With thee in beauty can compare
As day with night.

Soft are thy leaves and white: her arms
Boast whiter charms.
Thy stem prone bent with loveliness
Of maiden grace possesseth less:
Therein she charms.

Thou in thy lake dost see
Thyself: so she
Beholds her image in her eyes
Reflected. Thus did Venus rise
From out the sea.

Inconsolate, bloom not again,
Thou rival vain
Of her whose charms have thine outdone,
Whose purity might spot the sun,
And make thy leaf a stain.

STEPHEN COLLINS FOSTER
(1826-1864)

MY OLD KENTUCKY HOME

The sun shines bright in the old Kentucky home;
'Tis summer, the darkeys are gay;
The corn-top's ripe, and the meadow's in the bloom,
While the birds make music all the day.

The young folks roll on the little cabin floor,
All merry, all happy and bright;
By-'n'-by hard times comes a-knocking at the door:—
Then my old Kentucky home, good-night!

Weep no more, my lady,
O, weep no more to-day!
We will sing one song for the old Kentucky home,
For the old Kentucky home, far away.

They hunt no more for the possum and the coon,
On the meadow, the hill, and the shore;
They sing no more by the glimmer of the moon,
On the bench by the old cabin door.
The day goes by like a shadow o'er the heart,
With sorrow, where all was delight;
The time has come when the darkeys have to part:—
Then my old Kentucky home, good-night!

The head must bow, and the back will have to bend,
Wherever the darkey may go;
A few more days, and the trouble all will end,
In the field where the sugar-canes grow.
A few more days for to tote the weary load,—
No matter, 't will never be light;
A few more days till we totter on the road:—
Then my old Kentucky home, good-night!

Weep no more, my lady,
O, weep no more to-day!
We will sing one song for the old Kentucky home,
For the old Kentucky home, far away.

HENRY TIMROD (1829-1867)

AT MAGNOLIA CEMETERY

Sleep sweetly in your humble graves,
  Sleep, martyrs of a fallen cause;
Though yet no marble column craves
  The pilgrim here to pause.

In seeds of laurel in the earth
  The blossom of your fame is blown,
And somewhere, waiting for its birth,
  The shaft is in the stone!

Meanwhile, behalf the tardy years
  Which keep in trust your storied tombs,
Behold! your sisters bring their tears,
  And these memorial blooms.

Small tributes! but your shades will smile
  More proudly on these wreaths to-day,
Than when some cannon-moulded pile
  Shall overlook this bay.

Stoop, angels, hither from the skies!
  There is no holier spot of ground
Than where defeated valor lies,
  By mourning beauty crowned.

PAUL HAMILTON HAYNE (1830-1886)

ASPECTS OF THE PINES

Tall, sombre, grim, against the morning sky
  They rise, scarce touched by melancholy airs,
Which stir the fadeless foliage dreamfully,
  As if from realms of mystical despairs.

Tall, sombre, grim, they stand with dusky gleams
Brightening to gold within the woodland's core,
Beneath the gracious noontide's tranquil beams,—
But the weird winds of morning sigh no more.

A stillness, strange, divine, ineffable,
Broods round and o'er them in the wind's surcease,
And on each tinted copse and shimmering dell
Rests the mute rapture of deep hearted peace.

Last, sunset comes—the solemn joy and might
Borne from the west when cloudless day declines—
Low, flute-like breezes sweep the waves of light,
And, lifting dark green tresses of the pines,

Till every lock is luminous, gently float,
Fraught with hale odors up the heavens afar,
To faint when twilight on her virginal throat
Wears for a gem the tremulous vesper star.

MARY ASHLEY TOWNSEND (1832-1901)

DOWN THE BAYOU

The cypress swamp around me wraps its spell,
With hushing sounds in moss-hung branches there,
Like congregations rustling down to prayer,
While Solitude, like some unsounded bell,
Hangs full of secrets that it cannot tell,
And leafy litanies on the humid air
Intone themselves, and on the tree-trunks bare
The scarlet lichen writes her rubrics well.
The cypress-knees take on them marvellous shapes
Of pygmy nuns, gnomes, goblins, witches, fays,
The vigorous vine the withered gum-tree drapes,
Across the oozy ground the rabbit plays,
The moccasin to jungle depths escapes,
And through the gloom the wild deer shyly gaze.

JAMES RYDER RANDALL (1839-1908)

MY MARYLAND

The despot's heel is on thy shore,
Maryland!
His torch is at thy temple door,
Maryland!
Avenge the patriotic gore
That flecked the streets of Baltimore,
And be the battle-queen of yore,
Maryland, my Maryland!

Hark to an exiled son's appeal,
Maryland!
My Mother State, to thee I kneel,
Maryland!
For life and death, for woe and weal,
Thy peerless chivalry reveal,
And gird thy beauteous limbs with steel,
Maryland, my Maryland!

Thou wilt not cower in the dust,
Maryland!
Thy beaming sword shall never rust,
Maryland!
Remember Carroll's sacred trust,
Remember Howard's warlike thrust,
And all thy slumberers with the just,
Maryland, my Maryland!

Come! 'tis the red dawn of the day,
Maryland!
Come with thy panoplied array,
Maryland!

With Ringgold's spirit for the fray,
With Watson's blood at Monterey,
With fearless Lowe and dashing May,
Maryland, my Maryland!

Dear Mother, burst the tyrant's chain,
Maryland!
Virginia should not call in vain,
Maryland!
She meets her sisters on the plain,—
"*Sic semper!*" 'tis the proud refrain
That baffles minions back amain,
Arise in majesty again,
Maryland, my Maryland!

Come! for thy shield is bright and strong,
Maryland!
Come! for thy dalliance does thee wrong,
Maryland!
Come to thine own heroic throng
Stalking with Liberty along,
And chant thy dauntless slogan-song,
Maryland, my Maryland!

I see the blush upon thy cheek,
Maryland!
For thou wast ever bravely meek,
Maryland!
But lo! there surges forth a shriek,
From hill to hill, from creek to creek,
Potomac calls to Chesapeake,
Maryland, my Maryland!

Thou wilt not yield the Vandal toll,
Maryland!
Thou wilt not crook to his control,
Maryland!

Better the fire upon thee roll,
Better the shot, the blade, the bowl,
Than crucifixion of the soul,
Maryland, my Maryland!

I hear the distant thunder hum,
Maryland!
The Old Line's bugle, fife, and drum,
Maryland!
She is not dead, nor deaf, nor dumb;
Huzza; she spurns the Northern scum!
She breathes! She burns! She'll come! She'll come!
Maryland, my Maryland!

SIDNEY LANIER (1842-1881)

A BALLAD OF TREES AND THE MASTER

Into the woods my Master went,
Clean forspent, forspent.
Into the woods my Master came,
Forspent with love and shame.
But the olives they were not blind to Him;
The little gray leaves were kind to Him;
The thorn-tree had a mind to Him
When into the woods He came.

Out of the woods my Master went,
And He was well content.
Out of the woods my Master came,
Content with death and shame.
When Death and Shame would woo Him last,
From under the trees they drew Him last:
'Twas on a tree they slew Him—last,
When out of the woods He came.

NIGHT AND DAY

The innocent, sweet Day is dead.
Dark Night hath slain her in her bed.
O, Moors are as fierce to kill as to wed!
—Put out the light, said he.

A sweeter light than ever rayed
From star of heaven or eye of maid
Has vanished in the unknown Shade.
—She's dead, she's dead, said he.

Now, in a wild, sad after-mood
The tawny Night sits still to brood
Upon the dawn-time when he wooed.
—I would she lived, said he.

Star-memories of happier times,
Of loving deeds and lovers' rhymes,
Throng forth in silvery pantomimes.
—Come back, O day! said he.

SONG OF THE CHATTAHOOCHEE

Out of the hills of Habersham,
Down the valleys of Hall,
I hurry amain to reach the plain;
Run the rapid and leap the fall,
Split at the rock and together again,
Accept my bed, or narrow or wide,
And flee from folly on every side
With a lover's pain to attain the plain
Far from the hills of Habersham,
Far from the valleys of Hall.

All down the hills of Habersham,
All through the valleys of Hall,
The rushes cried *Abide, abide,*
The wilful waterweeds held me thrall,
The laving laurel turned my tide,
The ferns and the foundling grass said *Stay,*
The dewberry dipped for to work delay,
And the little reeds sighed *Abide, abide,*
Here in the hills of Habersham,
Here in the valleys of Hall.

High o'er the hills of Habersham,
Veiling the valleys of Hall,
The hickory told me manifold
Fair tales of shade, the poplar tall
Wrought me her shadowy self to hold,
The chestnut, the oak, the walnut, the pine,
Overleaning, with flickering meaning and sign,
Said, *Pass not, so cold, these manifold*
Deep shades of the hills of Habersham,
These glades in the valleys of Hall.

And oft in the hills of Habersham,
And oft in the valleys of Hall,
The white quartz shone, and the smooth brook-stone
Did bar me of passage with friendly brawl,
And many a luminous jewel lone
—Crystals clear or a-cloud with mist,
Ruby, garnet, and amethyst—
Made lures with the lights of streaming stone
In the clefts of the hills of Habersham,
In the beds of the valleys of Hall.

But oh, not the hills of Habersham,
And oh, not the valleys of Hall
Avail: I am fain for to water the plain.
Downward the voices of Duty call—
Downward, to toil and be mixed with the main,

The dry fields burn, and the mills are to turn,
And a myriad flowers mortally yearn,
And the lordly main from beyond the plain
Calls o'er the hills of Habersham,
Calls through the valleys of Hall.

IRWIN RUSSELL (1853-1879)

BLESSING THE DANCE

O Mahsr! let dis gath'rin fin' a blessin' in yo' sight!
Don't jedge us hard fur what we does—yo' know it's Chrismus-night;
An' all de balunce ob de yeah we does as right's we kin.
Ef dancin's wrong, O Mahsr! let de time excuse de sin!

We labors in de vin'ya'd, wukin' hard an' wukin' true;
Now, shorely yo' won't notus, ef we eats a grape or two,
An' takes a leetle holiday,—a leetle restin'-spell,—
Bekase, nex' week, we'll start in fresh, an' labor twicet as well.

Remember, Mahsr,—min' dis now,—de sinfulness ob sin
Is 'pendin' 'pon de sperrit what we goes an' does it in;
An' in a righchis frame ob min' we's gwine to dance an' sing,
A-feelin' like King David, when he cut de pigeon-wing.

It seems to me—indeed it do—I mebbe mout be wrong—
Dat people raly *ought* to dance, when Chrismus comes along;
Des dance bekase dey's happy—like de birds hops in de trees,
De pine-top fiddle soundin' to de bowin' ob de breeze.

We has no ark to dance afore, like Isrul's prophet king;
We has no harp to soun' de chords, to holp us out to sing;
But 'cordin' to de gif's we has we does de bes' we knows,
An' folks don't 'spise de vi'let-flower bekase it ain't de rose.

Yes, bless us, please, Sah, eben ef we's doin' wrong to-night;
Kase den we'll need de blessin' more'n ef we's doin' right;
An' let de blessin's stay wid us, untel we comes to die,
An' goes to keep our Chrismus wid dem sheriffs in de sky!

Yes, tell dem preshis anguls we's a-gwine to jine 'em soon:
Our voices we's a-trainin' fur to sing de glory tune;
We's ready when you wants us, an' it ain't no matter when.
O Mahsr! call yo' chillen soon, an' take 'em home! *Amen.*

WILLIAM DAVIS GALLAGHER
(1808-1894)

AUTUMN IN THE WEST

The autumn time is with us. Its approach
Was heralded, not many days ago,
By hazy skies that veiled the brazen sun,
And sea-like murmurs from the rustling corn,
And low-voiced brooks that wandered drowsily
By pendent clusters of empurpling grapes
Swinging upon the vine. And now, 'tis here!
And what a change hath passed upon the face
Of nature, where the waving forest spreads,
Then robed in deepest green! All through the night
The subtle frost has plied its magic art;
And in the day the golden sun hath wrought
True wonders; and the winds of morn and even
Have touched with magic breath the changing leaves.
And now, as wanders the dilating eye
Athwart the varied landscape, circling far,
What gorgeousness, what blazonry, what pomp
Of colors bursts upon the ravished sight!
Here, where the poplar rears its yellow crest,
A golden glory; yond, where the oak
Stands monarch of the forest, and the ash
Is girt with flame-like parasite, and broad
The dogwood spreads beneath, and, fringing all,
The sumac blushes to the ground, a flood
Of deepest crimson; and afar, where looms
The gnarlëd gum, a cloud of bloodiest red.

Out in the woods of autumn! I have cast
Aside the shackles of the town, that vex
The fetterless soul, and come to hide myself,
Miami! in thy venerable shades.
Here where seclusion looks out on a scene
Of matchless beauty, I will pause awhile,
And on this bank with varied mosses crowned
Gently recline. Beneath me, silver-bright,
Glide the calm waters, with a plaintive moan
For summer's parting glories. High o'er-head,
Seeking the sedgy brinks of still lagoons
That bask in southern suns the winter through,
Sails tireless the unerring waterfowl,
Screaming among the cloud-racks. Oft from where,
In bushy covert hid, the partridge stands,
Bursts suddenly the whistle clear and loud,
Far-echoing through the dim wood's fretted aisles.
Deep murmurs from the trees, bending with brown
And ripened mast, are interrupted oft
By sounds of dropping nuts; and warily
The turkey from the thicket comes, and swift
As flies an arrow darts the pheasant down,
To batten on the autumn; and the air,
At times, is darkened by a sudden rush
Of myriad wings, as the wild pigeon leads
His squadrons to the banquet. Far away,
Where tranquil groves on sunny slopes supply
Their liberal store of fruits, the merry laugh
Of children, and the truant school-boy's shout,
Ring on the air, as, from the hollows borne,
Nuts load their creaking carts, and lush pawpaws
Their motley baskets fill, with clustering grapes
And golden-sphered persimmons spread o'er all.

ALICE CARY (1820-1871)

BALDER'S WIFE

Her casement like a watchful eye
From the face of the wall looks down,
Lashed round with ivy vines so dry,
And with ivy leaves so brown.
Her golden head in her lily hand
Like a star in the spray o' the sea,
And wearily rocking to and fro,
She sings so sweet and she sings so low
To the little babe on her knee.
But let her sing what tune she may,
Never so light and never so gay,
It slips and slides and dies away
To the moan of the willow water.

Like some bright honey-hearted rose
That the wild wind rudely mocks,
She blooms from the dawn to the day's sweet close
Hemmed in with a world of rocks.
The livelong night she doth not stir,
But keeps at her casement lorn,
And the skirts of the darkness shine with her
As they shine with the light o' the morn,
And all who pass may hear her lay,
But let it be what tune it may,
It slips and slides and dies away
To the moan of the willow water.

And there, within that one-eyed tower,
Lashed round with the ivy brown,
She droops like some unpitied flower
That the rain-fall washes down:
The damp o' the dew in her golden hair,
Her cheek like the spray o' the sea,

And wearily rocking to and fro,
She sings so sweet and she sings so low
To the little babe on her knee.
But let her sing what tune she may,
Never so glad and never so gay,
It slips and slides and dies away
To the moan of the willow water.

PHOEBE CARY (1824-1871)

NEARER HOME

One sweetly solemn thought
Comes to me o'er and o'er;
I am nearer home to-day
Than I ever have been before;

Nearer my Father's house,
Where the many mansions be;
Nearer the great white throne,
Nearer the crystal sea;

Nearer the bound of life,
Where we lay our burdens down;
Nearer leaving the cross,
Nearer gaining the crown!

But lying darkly between,
Winding down through the night,
Is the silent, unknown stream,
That leads at last to the light.

Closer and closer my steps
Come to the dread abysm:
Closer Death to my lips
Presses the awful chrism.

Phoebe Cary

Oh, if my mortal feet
  Have almost gained the brink;
If it be I am nearer home
  Even to-day than I think;

Father, perfect my trust;
  Let my spirit feel in death,
That her feet are firmly set
  On the rock of a living faith!

JOHN JAMES PIATT (1835-1917)

SUGGESTED DEVICE OF A NEW WESTERN STATE

Far-off a young State rises, full of might:
I paint its brave escutcheon. Near at hand
See the log-cabin in the rough clearing stand;
A woman by its door, with steadfast sight,
Trustful, looks Westward, where, uplifted bright,
Some city's Apparition, weird and grand,
In dazzling quiet fronts the lonely land,
With vast and marvellous structures wrought of light,
Motionless on the burning cloud afar:
The haunting vision of a time to be,
After the heroic age is ended here,
Built on the boundless, still horizon's bar
By the low sun, his gorgeous prophecy
Lighting the doorway of the pioneer!

WILLIAM DEAN HOWELLS (1837-1920)

VISION

Within a poor man's squalid home I stood:
The one bare chamber, where his work-worn wife
Above the stove and wash-tub passed her life,
Next the sty where they slept with all their brood.

But I saw not that sunless, breathless lair,
The chamber's sagging roof and reeking floor;
The smeared walls, broken sash, and battered door;
The foulness and forlornness everywhere.
I saw a great house with the portals wide
Upon a banquet room, and, from without,
The guests descending in a brilliant line
By the stair's statued niches, and beside
The loveliest of the gemmed and silken rout
The poor man's landlord leading down to dine.

JOHN HAY (1838-1905)

JIM BLUDSO OF THE PRAIRIE BELLE

Wall, no! I can't tell whar he lives,
  Because he don't live, you see;
Leastways, he's got out of the habit
  Of livin' like you and me.
Whar have you been for the last three year
  That you haven't heard folks tell
How Jimmy Bludso passed in his checks
  The night of the Prairie Belle?

He weren't no saint,—them engineers
  Is all pretty much alike,—
One wife in Natchez-under-the-Hill
  And another one here, in Pike;
A keerless man in his talk was Jim,
  And an awkward hand in a row,
But he never flunked, and he never lied,—
  I reckon he never knowed how.

And this was all the religion he had,—
  To treat his engine well;
Never be passed on the river;
  To mind the pilot's bell;

And if ever the Prairie Belle took fire,—
A thousand times he swore
He'd hold her nozzle agin the bank
Till the last soul got ashore.

All boats has their day on the Mississip,
And her day come at last,—
The Movastar was a better boat,
But the Belle she *wouldn't* be passed.
And so she come tearin' along that night—
The oldest craft on the line—
With a nigger squat on her safety-valve,
And her furnace crammed, rosin and pine.

The fire bust out as she cleared the bar,
And burnt a hole in the night,
And quick as a flash she turned, and made
For that willer-bank on the right.
There was runnin' and cursin', but Jim yelled out,
Over all the infernal roar,
"I'll hold her nozzle agin the bank
Till the last galoot's ashore."

Through the hot, black breath of the burnin' boat
Jim Bludso's voice was heard,
And they all had trust in his cussedness,
And knowed he would keep his word.
And, sure's you're born, they all got off
Afore the smokestacks fell,—
And Bludso's ghost went up alone
In the smoke of the Prairie Belle.

He weren't no saint,—but at jedgment
I'd run my chance with Jim,
'Longside of some pious gentlemen
That wouldn't shook hands with him.

He seen his duty, a dead-sure thing,—
  And went for it thar and then;
And Christ ain't a going to be too hard
  On a man that died for men.

BRET HARTE (1839-1902)

PLAIN TALK FROM TRUTHFUL JAMES

Which I wish to remark,
  And my language is plain,
That for ways that are dark
  And for tricks that are vain,
The heathen Chinee is peculiar,
  Which the same I would rise to explain.

Ah Sin was his name;
  And I shall not deny,
In regard to the same,
  What that name might imply;
But his smile it was pensive and childlike,
  As I frequent remarked to Bill Nye.

It was August the third,
  And quite soft was the skies;
Which it might be inferred
  That Ah Sin was likewise;
Yet he played it that day upon William
  And me in a way I despise.

Which we had a small game,
  And Ah Sin took a hand:
It was Euchre. The same
  He did not understand;
But he smiled as he sat by the table,
  With a smile that was childlike and bland.

Yet the cards they were stocked
In a way that I grieve,
And my feelings were shocked
At the state of Nye's sleeve,
Which was stuffed full of aces and bowers,
And the same with intent to deceive.

But the hands that were played
By that heathen Chinee,
And the points that he made,
Were quite frightful to see,—
Till at last he put down a right bower,
Which the same Nye had dealt unto me!

Then I looked up at Nye,
And he gazed upon me;
And he rose with a sigh,
And said, "Can this be?
We are ruined by Chinese cheap labor,"—
And he went for that heathen Chinee.

In the scene that ensued
I did not take a hand,
But the floor it was strewed
Like the leaves on the strand
With the cards that Ah Sin had been hiding,
In the game "he did not understand."

In his sleeves, which were long,
He had twenty-four packs,—
Which was coming it strong,
Yet I state but the facts;
And we found on his nails, which were taper,
What is frequent in tapers,—that's wax.

Which is why I remark,
And my language is plain,
That for ways that are dark
And for tricks that are vain,

The heathen Chinee is peculiar,—
Which the same I am free to maintain.

GRIZZLY

Coward,—of heroic size,
In whose lazy muscles lies
Strength we fear and yet despise;
Savage,—whose relentless tusks
Are content with acorn husks;
Robber,—whose exploits ne'er soared
O'er the bee's or squirrel's hoard;
Whiskered chin, and feeble nose,
Claws of steel on baby toes,—
Here, in solitude and shade,
Shambling, shuffling plantigrade,
Be thy courses undismayed!

Here, where Nature makes thy bed,
Let thy rude, half-human tread
  Point to hidden Indian springs,
Lost in ferns and fragrant grasses,
  Hovered o'er by timid wings,
Where the wood-duck lightly passes,
Where the wild bee holds her sweets,
Epicurean retreats,
Fit for thee, and better than
Fearful spoils of dangerous man.
In thy fat-jowled deviltry
Friar Tuck shall live in thee;
Thou mayest levy tithe and dole;
  Thou shalt spread the woodland cheer,
From the pilgrim taking toll;
  Match thy cunning with his fear;
Eat, and drink, and have thy fill;
Yet remain an outlaw still!

JOAQUIN MILLER (1841-1913)

BY THE PACIFIC OCEAN

Here room and kingly silence keep
Companionship in state austere;
The dignity of death is here,
The large, lone vastness of the deep;
Here toil has pitched his camp to rest:
The west is banked against the west.

Above yon gleaming skies of gold
One lone imperial peak is seen;
While gathered at his feet in green
Ten thousand foresters are told:
And all so still! so still the air
That duty drops the web of care.

Beneath the sunset's golden sheaves
The awful deep walks with the deep,
Where silent sea doves slip and sweep,
And commerce keeps her loom and weaves.
The dead red men refuse to rest;
Their ghosts illume my lurid West.

AT THE GRAVE OF WALKER

He lies low in the levelled sand,
Unsheltered from the tropic sun,
And now of all he knew not one
Will speak him fair in that far land.
Perhaps 'twas this that made me seek,
Disguised, his grave one winter-tide;
A weakness for the weaker side,
A siding with the helpless weak.

A palm not far held out a hand,
Hard by a long green bamboo swung,
And bent like some great bow unstrung,
And quivered like a willow wand;
Perched on its fruits that crooked hang,
Beneath a broad banana's leaf,
A bird in rainbow splendor sang
A low, sad song, of tempered grief.

No sod, no sign, no cross nor stone,
But at his side a cactus green
Upheld its lances long and keen;
It stood in sacred sands alone,
Flat-palmed and fierce with lifted spears;
One bloom of crimson crowned its head,
A drop of blood, so bright, so red,
Yet redolent as roses' tears.

In my left hand I held a shell,
All rosy lipped and pearly red;
I laid it by his lowly bed,
For he did love so passing well
The grand songs of the solemn sea.
O shell! sing well, wild, with a will,
When storms blow loud and birds be still,
The wildest sea-song known to thee!

I said some things with folded hands,
Soft whispered in the dim sea-sound,
And eyes held humbly to the ground,
And frail knees sunken in the sands.
He had done more than this for me,
And yet I could not well do more:
I turned me down the olive shore,
And set a sad face to the sea.

Joaquin Miller

CROSSING THE PLAINS

What great yoked brutes with briskets low,
With wrinkled necks like buffalo,
With round, brown, liquid, pleading eyes,
That turned so slow and sad to you,
That shone like love's eyes soft with tears,
That seemed to plead, and make replies,
The while they bowed their necks and drew
The creaking load; and looked at you.
Their sable briskets swept the ground,
Their cloven feet kept solemn sound.

Two sullen bullocks led the line,
Their great eyes shining bright like wine;
Two sullen captive kings were they,
That had in time held herds at bay,
And even now they crushed the sod
With stolid sense of majesty,
And stately stepped and stately trod,
As if 't were something still to be
Kings even in captivity.

TO RUSSIA

Who tamed your lawless Tartar blood?
What David bearded in her den
That Russian bear in ages when
You strode your black, unbridled stud,
A skin-clad savage of your steppes?
Why, one who now sits low and weeps,
Why, one who now wails out to you,—
The Jew, the Jew, the homeless Jew.

Who girt the thews of your young prime
And bound your fierce divided force?
Why, who but Moses shaped your course
United down the grooves of time?

Your mighty millions all to-day
The hated, homeless Jew obey.
Who taught all poetry to you?
The Jew, the Jew, the hated Jew.

Who taught you tender Bible tales
Of honey-lands, of milk and wine?
Of happy, peaceful Palestine?
Of Jordan's holy harvest vales?
Who gave the patient Christ? I say,
Who gave your Christian creed? Yea, yea,
Who gave your very God to you?
Your Jew! Your Jew! Your hated Jew!

AMBROSE BIERCE (1842-?)

T. A. H.

Yes, he was that, or that, as you prefer,—
Did so and so, though, faith, it wasn't all;
Lived like a fool, or a philosopher,
And had whatever's needful to a fall.
As rough inflections on a planet merge
In the true bend of the gigantic sphere,
Nor mar the perfect circle of its verge,
So in the survey of his worth the small
Asperities of spirit disappear,
Lost in the grander curves of character.
He lately was hit hard; none knew but I
The strength and terror of that ghastly stroke,—
Not even herself. He uttered not a cry,
But set his teeth and made a revelry;
Drank like a devil,—staining sometimes red
The goblet's edge; diced with his conscience; spread,
Like Sisyphus, a feast for Death, and spoke
His welcome in a tongue so long forgot
That even his ancient guest remembered not

What race had cursed him in it. Thus my friend,
Still conjugating with each failing sense
The verb "to die" in every mood and tense,
Pursued his awful humor to the end.
When, like a stormy dawn, the crimson broke
From his white lips, he smiled and mutely bled,
And, having meanly lived, is grandly dead.

MONTEFIORE

I saw—'twas in a dream, the other night—
A man whose hair with age was thin and white;
One hundred years had bettered by his birth,
And still his step was firm, his eye was bright.

Before him and about him pressed a crowd.
Each head in reverence was bared and bowed,
And Jews and Gentiles in a hundred tongues
Extolled his deeds and spake his fame aloud.

I joined the throng and, pushing forward, cried,
"Montefiore!" with the rest, and vied
In efforts to caress the hand that ne'er
To want and worth had charity denied.

So closely round him swarmed our shouting clan
He scarce could breathe, and, taking from a pan
A gleaming coin, he tossed it o'er our heads,
And in a moment was a lonely man!

MAURICE THOMPSON (1844-1901)

A FLIGHT SHOT

We were twin brothers, tall and hale,
Glad wanderers over hill and dale.

We stood within the twilight shade
Of pines that rimmed a Southern glade.

He said: "Let's settle, if we can,
Which of us is the stronger man.

"We'll try a flight shot, high and good,
Across the green glade toward the wood."

And so we bent in sheer delight
Our old yew bows with all our might.

Our long keen shafts, drawn to the head,
Were poised a moment ere they sped.

As we leaned back a breath of air
Mingled the brown locks of our hair.

We loosed. As one our bow-cords rang,
As one away our arrows sprang.

Away they sprang; the wind of June
Thrilled to their softly whistled tune.

We watched their flight, and saw them strike
Deep in the ground slantwise alike,

So far away that they might pass
For two thin straws of broom-sedge grass!

Then arm in arm we doubting went
To find whose shaft was farthest sent,

Each fearing in his loving heart
That brother's shaft had fallen short.

But who could tell by such a plan
Which of us was the stronger man?

There at the margin of the wood,
Side by side our arrows stood

Their red cock-feathers wing and wing,
Their amber nocks still quivering,

Their points deep-planted where they fell
An inch apart and parallel!

We clasped each other's hands; said he,
"Twin champions of the world are we!"

EUGENE FIELD (1850-1895)

WYNKEN, BLYNKEN, AND NOD

Wynken, Blynken, and Nod one night
Sailed off in a wooden shoe,—
Sailed on a river of crystal light
Into a sea of dew.
"Where are you going, and what do you wish?"
The old moon asked the three.
"We have come to fish for the herring-fish
That live in this beautiful sea;
Nets of silver and gold have we,"
Said Wynken,
Blynken,
And Nod.

The old moon laughed and sang a song,
As they rocked in the wooden shoe;
And the wind that sped them all night long
Ruffled the waves of dew;
The little stars were the herring-fish
That lived in the beautiful sea.
"Now cast your nets wherever you wish,—
Never afeard are we!"
So cried the stars to the fishermen three,
Wynken,
Blynken,
And Nod.

All night long their nets they threw
To the stars in the twinkling foam,—
Then down from the skies came the wooden shoe,
Bringing the fishermen home:
'Twas all so pretty a sail, it seemed
As if it could not be;
And some folk thought 'twas a dream they'd dreamed
Of sailing that beautiful sea;
But I shall name you the fishermen three:
Wynken,
Blynken,
And Nod.

Wynken and Blynken are two little eyes,
And Nod is a little head,
And the wooden shoe that sailed the skies
Is a wee one's trundle-bed;
So shut your eyes while Mother sings
Of wonderful sights that be,
And you shall see the beautiful things
As you rock on the misty sea
Where the old shoe rocked the fishermen three,—
Wynken,
Blynken,
And Nod.

PART FOUR

THOMAS WENTWORTH HIGGINSON
(1823-1911)

TO DUTY

Light of dim mornings, shield from heat and cold;
Balm for all ailments; substitute for praise;
Comrade of those who plod in lonely ways
(Ways that grow lonelier as the years wax old);
Tonic for fears; check to the over-bold;
Nurse, whose calm hand its strong restriction lays,
Kind but resistless, on our wayward days;
Mart, where high wisdom at vast price is sold;
Gardener, whose touch bids the rose-petals fall,
The thorns endure; surgeon, who human hearts
Searchest with probes, though the death-touch be given;
Spell that knits friends, but yearning lovers parts;
Tyrant relentless o'er our blisses all;—
Oh, can it be, thine other name is Heaven?

GEORGE HENRY BOKER (1823-1890)

TO ENGLAND

I

Lear and Cordelia! 'twas an ancient tale
  Before thy Shakespeare gave it deathless fame;
  The times have changed, the moral is the same.
So like an outcast, dowerless and pale,
Thy daughter went; and in a foreign gale
  Spread her young banner, till its sway became
  A wonder to the nations. Days of shame
Are close upon thee; prophets raise their wail.

When the rude Cossack with an outstretched hand
  Points his long spear across the narrow sea,—
  "Lo! there is England!" when thy destiny
Storms on thy straw-crowned head, and thou dost stand
Weak, helpless, mad, a by-word in the land,—
  God grant thy daughter a Cordelia be!

II

Stand, thou great bulwark of man's liberty!
  Thou rock of shelter, rising from the wave,
  Sole refuge to the overwearied brave
Who planned, arose, and battled to be free,
Fell, undeterred, then sadly turned to thee,—
  Saved the free spirit from their country's grave,
  To rise again, and animate the slave,
When God shall ripen all things. Britons, ye
Who guard the sacred outpost, not in vain
  Hold your proud peril! Freemen undefiled,
  Keep watch and ward! Let battlements be piled
Around your cliffs; fleets marshalled, till the main
Sink under them; and if your courage wane,
  Through force or fraud, look westward to your child!

BAYARD TAYLOR (1825-1878)

BEDOUIN SONG

From the Desert I come to thee
  On a stallion shod with fire;
And the winds are left behind
  In the speed of my desire.
Under thy window I stand,
  And the midnight hears my cry:
I love thee, I love but thee,
  With a love that shall not die

Till the sun grows cold,
And the stars are old,
And the leaves of the Judgment
Book unfold!

Look from thy window and see
My passion and my pain;
I lie on the sands below,
And I faint in thy disdain.
Let the night-winds touch thy brow
With the heat of my burning sigh,
And melt thee to hear the vow
Of a love that shall not die
Till the sun grows cold,
And the stars are old,
And the leaves of the Judgment
Book unfold!

My steps are nightly driven,
By the fever in my breast,
To hear from thy lattice breathed
The word that shall give me rest.
Open the door of thy heart,
And open thy chamber door,
And my kisses shall teach thy lips
The love that shall fade no more
Till the sun grows cold,
And the stars are old,
And the leaves of the Judgment
Book unfold!

RICHARD HENRY STODDARD
(1825-1903)

THE WITCH'S WHELP

Along the shore the slimy brine-pits yawn,
Covered with thick green scum; the billows rise,

And fill them to the brim with clouded foam,
And then subside, and leave the scum again.
The ribbed sand is full of hollow gulfs,
Where monsters from the waters come and lie.
Great serpents bask at noon along the rocks,
To me no terror; coil on coil they roll
Back to their holes before my flying feet.
The Dragon of the Sea, my mother's god,
Enormous Setebos, comes here to sleep;
Him I molest not; when he flaps his wing
A whirlwind rises, when he swims the deep
It threatens to engulf the trembling isle.
Sometimes when winds do blow, and clouds are dark,
I seek the blasted wood whose barkless trunks
Are bleached with summer suns; the creaking trees
Stoop down to me, and swing me right and left
Through crashing limbs, but not a jot care I.
The thunder breaks above, and in their lairs
The panthers roar; from out the stormy clouds
Whose hearts are fire, sharp lightnings rain around
And split the oaks; not faster lizards run
Before the snake up the slant trunks than I,
Not faster down, sliding with hands and feet.
I stamp upon the ground, and adders rouse,
Sharp-eyed, with poisonous fangs; beneath the leaves
They couch, or under rocks, and roots of trees
Felled by the winds; through briery undergrowth
They slide with hissing tongues, beneath my feet
To writhe, or in my fingers squeezed to death.
There is a wild and solitary pine,
Deep in the meadows; all the island birds
From far and near fly there, and learn new songs.
Something imprisoned in its wrinkled bark
Wails for its freedom; when the bigger light
Burns in mid-heaven, and dew elsewhere is dried,
There it still falls; the quivering leaves are tongues,
And load the air with syllables of woe.

One day I thrust my spear within a cleft
No wider than its point, and something shrieked,
And falling cones did pelt me sharp as hail:
I picked the seeds that grew between their plates,
And strung them round my neck with sea-mew eggs.
  Hard by are swamps and marshes, reedy fens
Knee-deep in water; monsters wade therein
Thick-set with plated scales; sometimes in troops
They crawl on slippery banks; sometimes they lash
The sluggish waves among themselves at war.
Often I heave great rocks from off the crags,
And crush their bones; often I push my spear
Deep in their drowsy eyes, at which they howl
And chase me inland; then I mount their humps
And prick them back again, unwieldy, slow.
At night the wolves are howling round the place,
And bats sail there athwart the silver light,
Flapping their wings; by day in hollow trees
They hide, and slink into the gloom of dens.
  We live, my mother Sycorax and I,
In caves with bloated toads and crested snakes.
She can make charms, and philters, and brew storms,
And call the great Sea Dragon from his deeps.
Nothing of this know I, nor care to know.
Give me the milk of goats in gourds or shells,
The flesh of birds and fish, berries and fruit,
Nor want I more, save all day long to lie,
And hear, as now, the voices of the sea.

ELIZABETH STODDARD (1823-1902)

LAST DAYS

As one who follows a departing friend,
Destined to cross the great, dividing sea,
I watch and follow these departing days,
That go so grandly, lifting up their crowns

Still regal, though their victor Autumn comes.
Gifts they bestow, which I accept, return,
As gifts exchanged between a loving pair,
Who may possess them as memorials
Of pleasures ended by the shadow—Death.
What matter which shall vanish hence, if both
Are transitory—me, and these bright hours—
And of the future ignorant alike?
From all our social thralls I would be free.
Let care go down the wind—as hounds afar,
Within their kennels baying unseen foes,
Give to calm sleepers only calmer dreams.
Here will I rest alone: the morning mist
Conceals no form but mine; the evening dew
Freshens but faded flowers and my worn face.
When the noon basks among the wooded hills
I too will bask, as silent as the air
So thick with sun-motes, dyed like yellow gold,
Or colored purple like an unplucked plum.
The thrush, now lonesome, for her young have flown,
May flutter her brown wings across my path;
And creatures of the sod with brilliant eyes
May leap beside me, and familiar grow.
The moon shall rise among her floating clouds,
Black, vaporous fans, and crinkled globes of pearl,
And her sweet silver light be given to me.
To watch and follow these departing days
Must be my choice; and let me mated be
With Solitude; may memory and hope
Unite to give me faith that nothing dies;
To show me always, what I pray to know,
That man alone may speak the word—*Farewell.*

JOHN TOWNSEND TROWBRIDGE
(1827-1916)

MIDWINTER

The speckled sky is dim with snow,
The light flakes falter and fall slow;
Athwart the hill-top, rapt and pale,
Silently drops a silvery veil;
And all the valley is shut in
By flickering curtains gray and thin.

But cheerily the chickadee
Singeth to me on fence and tree;
The snow sails round him as he sings,
White as the down of angels' wings.

I watch the slow flakes as they fall
On bank and brier and broken wall;
Over the orchard, waste and brown,
All noiselessly they settle down,
Tipping the apple-boughs, and each
Light quivering twig of plum and peach.

On turf and curb and bower-roof
The snow-storm spreads its ivory woof;
It paves with pearl the garden-walk;
And lovingly round tattered stalk
And shivering stem its magic weaves
A mantle fair as lily-leaves.

The hooded beehive, small and low,
Stands like a maiden in the snow;
And the old door-slab is half hid
Under an alabaster lid.

All day it snows: the sheeted post
Gleams in the dimness like a ghost;
All day the blasted oak has stood
A muffled wizard of the wood;
Garland and airy cap adorn
The sumach and the wayside thorn,
And clustering spangles lodge and shine
In the dark tresses of the pine.

The ragged bramble, dwarfed and old,
Shrinks like a beggar in the cold;
In surplice white the cedar stands,
And blesses him with priestly hands.

Still cheerily the chickadee
Singeth to me on fence and tree:
But in my inmost ear is heard
The music of a holier bird;
And heavenly thoughts as soft and white
As snow-flakes, on my soul alight,
Clothing with love my lonely heart,
Healing with peace each bruised part,
Till all my being seems to be
Transfigured by their purity.

ROSE TERRY COOKE (1827-1892)

ARACHNE

I watch her in the corner there,
As, restless, bold, and unafraid,
She slips and floats along the air
Till all her subtile house is made.

Her home, her bed, her daily food,
All from that hidden store she draws;
She fashions it and knows it good,
By instinct's strong and sacred laws.

No tenuous threads to weave her nest,
She seeks and gathers there or here;
But spins it from her faithful breast,
Renewing still, till leaves are sere.

Then, worn with toil, and tired of life,
In vain her shining traps are set.
Her frost hath hushed the insect strife
And gilded flies her charm forget.

But swinging in the snares she spun,
She sways to every wintry wind:
Her joy, her toil, her errand done,
Her corse the sport of storms unkind.

Poor sister of the spinster clan!
I too from out my store within
My daily life and living plan,
My home, my rest, my pleasure spin.

I know thy heart when heartless hands
Sweep all that hard-earned web away:
Destroy its pearled and glittering bands,
And leave thee homeless by the way.

I know thy peace when all is done.
Each anchored thread, each tiny knot,
Soft shining in the autumn sun;
A sheltered, silent, tranquil lot.

I know what thou hast never known,—
Sad presage to a soul allowed,—
That not for life I spin, alone,
But day by day I spin my shroud.

HELEN HUNT JACKSON (1831-1885)

HABEAS CORPUS

My body, eh? Friend Death, how now?
  Why all this tedious pomp of writ?
Thou hast reclaimed it sure and slow
  For half a century, bit by bit.

In faith thou knowest more to-day
  Than I do, where it can be found!
This shriveled lump of suffering clay,
  To which I now am chained and bound,

Has not of kith or kin a trace
  To the good body once I bore;
Look at this shrunken, ghastly face:
  Didst ever see that face before?

Ah, well, friend Death, good friend thou art;
  Thy only fault thy lagging gait,
Mistaken pity in thy heart
  For timorous ones that bid thee wait

Do quickly all thou hast to do,
  Nor I nor mine will hindrance make;
I shall be free when thou art through;
  I grudge thee naught that thou must take!

Stay! I have lied: I grudge thee one,
  Yes, two I grudge thee at this last,—
Two members which have faithful done
  My will and bidding in the past.

I grudge thee this right hand of mine;
  I grudge thee this quick-beating heart;
They never gave me coward sign,
  Nor played me once a traitor's part.

I see now why in olden days
  Men in barbaric love or hate
Nailed enemies' hands at wild crossways,
  Shrined leaders' hearts in costly state:

The symbol, sign, and instrument
  Of each soul's purpose, passion, strife,
Of fires in which are poured and spent
  Their all of love, their all of life.

O feeble, mighty human hand!
  O fragile, dauntless human heart!
The universe holds nothing planned
  With such sublime, transcendent art!

Yes, Death, I own I grudge thee mine
  Poor little hand, so feeble now;
Its wrinkled palm, its altered line,
  Its veins so pallid and so slow—

(*Unfinished here.*)

Ah, well, friend Death, good friend thou art:
  I shall be free when thou art through.
Take all there is—take hand and heart:
  There must be somewhere work to do.

EMILY DICKINSON (1830-1886)

FROM "COMPLETE POEMS"

I

I taste a liquor never brewed,
From tankards scooped in pearl;
Not all the vats upon the Rhine
Yield such an alcohol!

Inebriate of air am I,
And debauchee of dew,
Reeling, through endless summer days,
From inns of molten blue.

When the landlords turn the drunken bee
Out of the foxglove's door,
When butterflies renounce their drams,
I shall but drink the more!

Till seraphs swing their snowy hats,
And saints to windows run,
To see the little tippler
Leaning against the sun!

II

My life closed twice before its close;
It yet remains to see
If Immortality unveil
A third event to me,

So huge, so hopeless to conceive,
As these that twice befell.
Parting is all we know of heaven,
And all we need of hell.

III

I dreaded that first robin so,
But he is mastered now,
And I'm accustomed to him grown,—
He hurts a little, though.

I thought if I could only live
Till that first shout got by,
Not all pianos in the woods
Had power to mangle me.

I dared not meet the daffodils,
For fear their yellow gown
Would pierce me with a fashion
So foreign to my own.

I wished the grass would hurry,
So when 'twas time to see,
He'd be too tall, the tallest one
Could stretch to look at me.

I could not bear the bees should come,
I wished they'd stay away
In those dim countries where they go:
What word had they for me?

They're here, though; not a creature failed,
No blossom stayed away
In gentle deference to me,
The Queen of Calvary.

Each one salutes me as he goes
And I my childish plumes
Lift, in bereaved acknowledgment
Of their unthinking drums.

IV

I started early, took my dog,
And visited the sea;
The mermaids in the basement
Came out to look at me,

And frigates in the upper floor
Extended hempen hands,
Presuming me to be a mouse
Aground, upon the sands.

But no man moved me till the tide
Went past my simple shoe,
And past my apron and my belt,
And past my bodice too,

And made as he would eat me up
As wholly as a dew
Upon a dandelion's sleeve—
And then I started too.

And he—he followed close behind;
I felt his silver heel
Upon my ankle,—then my shoes
Would overflow with pearl.

Until we met the solid town,
No man he seemed to know;
And bowing with a mighty look
At me, the sea withdrew.

V

A bird came down the walk:
He did not know I saw;
He bit an angle-worm in halves
And ate the fellow, raw.

And then he drank a dew
From a convenient grass,
And then hopped sidewise to the wall
To let a beetle pass.

He glanced with rapid eyes
That hurried all abroad,—
They looked like frightened beads, I thought
He stirred his velvet head

Like one in danger; cautious,
I offered him a crumb,
And he unrolled his feathers
And rowed him softer home

Than oars divide the ocean,
Too silver for a seam,
Or butterflies, off banks of noon,
Leap, plashless, as they swim.

VI

If you were coming in the fall,
I'd brush the summer by
With half a smile and half a spurn,
As housewives do a fly.

If I could see you in a year,
I'd wind the months in balls,
And put them each in separate drawers,
Until their time befalls.

If only centuries delayed,
I'd count them on my hand,
Subtracting till my fingers dropped
Into Van Diemen's land.

If certain, when this life was out,
That yours and mine should be,
I'd toss it yonder like a rind,
And taste eternity.

But now, all ignorant of the length
Of time's uncertain wing,
It goads me, like the goblin bee,
That will not state its sting.

VII

One dignity delays for all,
One mitred afternoon.
None can avoid this purple,
None evade this crown.

Coach it insures, and footmen,
Chamber and state and throng;
Bells, also, in the village,
As we ride grand along.

What dignified attendants,
What service when we pause!
How loyally at parting
Their hundred hats they raise!

How pomp surpassing ermine,
When simple you and I
Present our meek escutcheon,
And claim the rank to die!

VIII

Because I could not stop for Death,
He kindly stopped for me;
The carriage held but just ourselves
And Immortality.

We slowly drove, he knew no haste,
And I had put away
My labor, and my leisure too,
For his civility.

We passed the school where children played
At wrestling in a ring;
We passed the fields of gazing grain,
We passed the setting sun.

We paused before a house that seemed
A swelling of the ground;
The roof was scarcely visible,
The cornice but a mound.

Since then 'tis centuries; but each
Feels shorter than the day
I first surmised the horses' heads
Were toward eternity.

EDMUND CLARENCE STEDMAN
(1833-1908)

PAN IN WALL STREET

Just where the Treasury's marble front
  Looks over Wall Street's mingled nations;
Where Jews and Gentiles most are wont
  To throng for trade and last quotations;
Where, hour by hour, the rates of gold
  Outrival, in the ears of people,
The quarter-chimes, serenely tolled
  From Trinity's undaunted steeple,—

Even there I heard a strange, wild strain
  Sound high above the modern clamor,
Above the cries of greed and gain,
  The curbstone war, the auction's hammer;
And swift, on Music's misty ways,
  It led, from all this strife for millions,
To ancient, sweet-do-nothing days
  Among the kirtle-robed Sicilians.

And as it stilled the multitude,
  And yet more joyous rose, and shriller,
I saw the minstrel, where he stood
  At ease against a Doric pillar:
One hand a droning organ played,
  The other held a Pan's-pipe (fashioned
Like those of old) to lips that made
  The reeds give out that strain impassioned.

'Twas Pan himself had wandered here
  A-strolling through this sordid city,
And piping to the civic ear
  The prelude of some pastoral ditty!

The demigod had crossed the seas,—
From haunts of shepherd, nymph, and satyr,
And Syracusan times,—to these
Far shores and twenty centuries later.

A ragged cap was on his head;
But—hidden thus—there was no doubting
That, all with crispy locks o'erspread,
His gnarlëd horns were somewhere sprouting;
His club-feet, cased in rusty shoes,
Were crossed, as on some frieze you see them,
And trousers, patched of divers hues,
Concealed his crooked shanks beneath them.

He filled the quivering reeds with sound,
And o'er his mouth their changes shifted,
And with his goat's-eyes looked around
Where'er the passing current drifted;
And soon, as on Trinacrian hills
The nymphs and herdsmen ran to hear him,
Even now the tradesmen from their tills,
With clerks and porters, crowded near him.

The bulls and bears together drew
From Jauncey Court and New Street Alley,
As erst, if pastorals be true,
Came beasts from every wooded valley;
The random passers stayed to list,—
A boxer Aegon, rough and merry,
A Broadway Daphnis, on his tryst
With Nais at the Brooklyn Ferry.

A one-eyed Cyclops halted long
In tattered cloak of army pattern,
And Galatea joined the throng,—
A blowsy, apple-vending slattern;

While old Silenus staggered out
From some new-fangled lunch-house handy,
And bade the piper, with a shout,
To strike up Yankee Doodle Dandy!

A newsboy and a peanut-girl
Like little Fauns began to caper:
His hair was all in tangled curl,
Her tawny legs were bare and taper;
And still the gathering larger grew,
And gave its pence and crowded nigher,
While aye the shepherd-minstrel blew
His pipe, and struck the gamut higher.

O heart of Nature, beating still
With throbs her vernal passion taught her,—
Even here, as on the vine-clad hill,
Or by the Arethusan water!
New forms may fold the speech, new lands
Arise within these ocean-portals,
But Music waves eternal wands,—
Enchantress of the souls of mortals!

So thought I,—but among us trod
A man in blue, with legal baton,
And scoffed the vagrant demigod,
And pushed him from the step I sat on.
Doubting I mused upon the cry,
"Great Pan is dead!"—and all the people
Went on their ways:—and clear and high
The quarter sounded from the steeple.

RICHARD REALF (1834-1878)

INDIRECTION

Fair are the flowers and the children, but their subtle suggestion
is fairer;
Rare is the roseburst of dawn, but the secret that clasps it is
rarer;
Sweet the exultance of song, but the strain that precedes it is
sweeter;
And never was poem yet writ, but the meaning outmastered the
metre.

Never a daisy that grows, but a mystery guideth the growing;
Never a river that flows, but a majesty sceptres the flowing;
Never a Shakespeare that soared, but a stronger than he did en-
fold him,
Nor ever a prophet foretells, but a mightier seer hath foretold
him.

Back of the canvas that throbs the painter is hinted and hidden;
Into the statue that breathes the soul of the sculptor is bidden;
Under the joy that is felt lie the infinite issues of feeling;
Crowning the glory revealed is the glory that crowns the re-
vealing.

Great are the symbols of being, but that which is symboled
greater;
Vast the create and beheld, but vaster the inward creator;
Back of the sound broods the silence, back of the gift stands the
giving;
Back of the hand that receives thrill the sensitive nerves of
receiving.

Speed is as nothing to spirit, the deed is outdone by the doing;
The heart of the wooer is warm, but warmer the heart of the
wooing;

And up from the pits where these shiver, and up from the heights where those shine,
Twin voices and shadows swim starward, and the essence of life is divine.

LOUISE CHANDLER MOULTON
(1835-1908)

HIC JACET

So Love is dead that has been quick so long!
Close, then, his eyes, and bear him to his rest,
With eglantine and myrtle on his breast,
And leave him there, their pleasant scents among;
And chant a sweet and melancholy song
About the charms whereof he was possessed,
And how of all things he was loveliest,
And to compare with aught were him to wrong.
Leave him beneath the still and solemn stars,
That gather and look down from their far place
With their long calm our brief woes to deride,
Until the Sun the Morning's gate unbars
And mocks, in turn, our sorrows with his face;—
And yet, had Love been Love, he had not died.

THOMAS BAILEY ALDRICH
(1836-1907)

ENAMORED ARCHITECT OF AIRY RHYME

Enamored architect of airy rhyme,
Build as thou wilt; heed not what each man says:
Good souls, but innocent of dreamers' ways,
Will come, and marvel why thou wastest time;
Others, beholding how thy turrets climb
'Twixt theirs and heaven, will hate thee all thy days;
But most beware of those who come to praise.
O Wondersmith, O worker in sublime

And heaven-sent dreams, let art be all in all;
Build as thou wilt, unspoiled by praise or blame,
Build as thou wilt, and as thy light is given:
Then, if at last the airy structure fall,
Dissolve, and vanish—take thyself no shame.
They fail, and they alone, who have not striven.

REMINISCENCE

Though I am native to this frozen zone
That half the twelvemonth torpid lies, or dead;
Though the cold azure arching overhead
And the Atlantic's never-ending moan
Are mine by heritage, I must have known
Life otherwise in epochs long since fled;
For in my veins some Orient blood is red,
And through my thought are lotus blossoms blown.
I do remember . . . it was just at dusk,
Near a walled garden at the river's turn
(A thousand summers seem but yesterday!),
A Nubian girl, more sweet than Khoorja musk,
Came to the water-tank to fill her urn,
And, with the urn, she bore my heart away!

HEREDITY

A soldier of the Cromwell stamp,
With sword and psalm-book by his side,
At home alike in church and camp:
Austere he lived, and smileless died.

But she, a creature soft and fine—
From Spain, some say, some say from France;
Within her veins leapt blood like wine—
She led her Roundhead lord a dance!

In Grantham church they lie asleep;
Just where, the verger may not know.
Strange that two hundred years should keep
The old ancestral fires aglow!

In me these two have met again;
To each my nature owes a part:
To one, the cool and reasoning brain;
To one, the quick, unreasoning heart.

JOHN BURROUGHS (1837-1921)

WAITING

Serene, I fold my hands and wait,
Nor care for wind, or tide, or sea;
I rave no more 'gainst time or fate,
For, lo! my own shall come to me.

I stay my haste, I make delays,
For what avails this eager pace?
I stand amid the eternal ways,
And what is mine shall know my face.

Asleep, awake, by night or day,
The friends I seek are seeking me;
No wind can drive my bark astray,
Nor change the tide of destiny.

What matter if I stand alone?
I wait with joy the coming years;
My heart shall reap where it has sown,
And garner up its fruit of tears.

The waters know their own and draw
The brook that springs in yonder height;
So flows the good with equal law
Unto the soul of pure delight.

The stars come nightly to the sky;
The tidal wave unto the sea;
Nor time, nor space, nor deep, nor high,
Can keep my own away from me.

EDWARD ROWLAND SILL (1841-1887)

EVENING

The Sun is gone: those glorious chariot-wheels
Have sunk their broadening spokes of flame, and left
Thin rosy films wimpled across the West,
Whose last faint tints melt slowly in the blue,
As the last trembling cadence of a song
Fades into silence sweeter than all sound.

Now the first stars begin to tremble forth
Like the first instruments of an orchestra
Touched softly, one by one.—There in the East
Kindles the glory of moonrise: how its waves
Break in a surf of silver on the clouds!—
White, motionless clouds, like soft and snowy wings
Which the great Earth spreads, sailing round the Sun.

O silent stars! that over ages past
Have shone serenely as ye shine to-night,
Unseal, unseal the secret that ye keep!
Is it not time to tell us why we live?
Through all these shadowy corridors of years
(Like some gray Priest, who through the Mysteries
Led the blindfolded Neophyte in fear),
Time leads us blindly onward, till in wrath
Tired Life would seize and throttle its stern guide,
And force him tell us *whither* and *how long*.
But Time gives back no answer—only points
With motionless finger to eternity,

Which deepens over us, as that deep sky
Darkens above me: only its vestibule
Glimmers with scattered stars; and down the West
A silent meteor slowly slides afar,
As though, pacing the garden-walks of heaven,
Some musing seraph had let fall a flower.

FIVE LIVES

Five mites of monads dwelt in a round drop
That twinkled on a leaf by a pool in the sun.
To the naked eye they lived invisible;
Specks, for a world of whom the empty shell
Of a mustard-seed had been a hollow sky.

One was a meditative monad, called a sage;
And, shrinking all his mind within, he thought:
"Tradition, handed down for hours and hours,
Tells that our globe, this quivering crystal world,
Is slowly dying. What if, seconds hence,
When I am very old, yon shimmering dome
Come drawing down and down, till all things end?"
Then with a weazen smirk he proudly felt
No other mote of God had ever gained
Such giant grasp of universal truth.

One was a transcendental monad; thin
And long and slim in the mind; and thus he mused:
"Oh, vast, unfathomable monad-souls!
Made in the image"—a hoarse frog croaks from the pool—
"Hark! 'twas some god, voicing his glorious thought
In thunder music! Yea, we hear their voice,
And we may guess their minds from ours, their work.
Some taste they have like ours, some tendency
To wriggle about, and munch a trace of scum."
He floated up on a pin-point bubble of gas
That burst, pricked by the air, and he was gone.

One was a barren-minded monad, called
A positivist; and he knew positively:
"There is no world beyond this certain drop.
Prove me another! Let the dreamers dream
Of their faint dreams, and noises from without,
And higher and lower; life is life enough."
Then swaggering half a hair's breadth, hungrily
He seized upon an atom of bug, and fed.

One was a tattered monad, called a poet;
And with shrill voice ecstatic thus he sang:
"Oh, the little female monad's lips!
Oh, the little female monad's eyes:
Ah, the little, little, female, female monad!"

The last was a strong-minded monadess,
Who dashed amid the infusoria,
Danced high and low, and wildly spun and dove
Till the dizzy others held their breath to see.

But while they led their wondrous little lives
Aeonian moments had gone wheeling by.
The burning drop had shrunk with fearful speed;
A glistening film—'twas gone; the leaf was dry.
The little ghost of an inaudible squeak
Was lost to the frog that goggled from his stone;
Who, at the huge, slow tread of a thoughtful ox
Coming to drink, stirred sideways fatly, plunged,
Launched backward twice, and all the pool was still.

RICHARD WATSON GILDER
(1844-1909)

THE CELESTIAL PASSION

O white and midnight sky! O starry bath!
Wash me in thy pure, heavenly, crystal flood;
Cleanse me, ye stars, from earthly soil and scath;
Let not one taint remain in spirit or blood!

Receive my soul, ye burning, awful deeps;
Touch and baptize me with the mighty power
That in ye thrills, while the dark planet sleeps;
Make me all yours for one blest, secret hour!
O glittering host! O high angelic choir!
Silence each tone that with thy music jars;
Fill me even as an urn with thy white fire
Till all I am is kindred to the stars!
Make me thy child, thou infinite, holy night—
So shall my days be full of heavenly light!

JOHN BOYLE O'REILLY
(1844-1890)

A WHITE ROSE

The red rose whispers of passion,
And the white rose breathes of love;
Oh, the red rose is a falcon,
And the white rose is a dove.

But I send you a cream-white rosebud
With a flush on its petal tips;
For the love that is purest and sweetest
Has a kiss of desire on the lips.

LLOYD MIFFLIN (1846-1921)

THE SOVEREIGNS

They who create rob death of half its stings;
They, from the dim inane and vague opaque
Of nothingness, build with their thought, and make
Enduring entities and beauteous things;
They are the Poets—they give airy wings
To shapes marmorean; or they overtake
The Ideal with the brush, or, soaring, wake
Far in the rolling clouds their glorious strings.

The Poet is the only potentate;
His sceptre reaches o'er remotest zones;
His thought remembered and his golden tones
Shall, in the ears of nations uncreate,
Roll on for ages and reverberate
When Kings are dust beside forgotten thrones.

THE FLIGHT

Upon a cloud among the stars we stood.
The angel raised his hand and looked and said,
"Which world, of all yon starry myriad,
Shall we make wing to?" The still solitude
Became a harp whereon his voice and mood
Made spheral music round his haloed head.
I spake—for then I had not long been dead—
"Let me look round upon the vasts, and brood
A moment on these orbs ere I decide . . .
What is yon lower star that beauteous shines
And with soft splendor now incarnadines
Our wings?—*There* would I go and there abide."
He smiled as one who some child's thought divines:
"That is the world where yesternight you died."

FIAT LUX

Then that dread angel near the awful throne,
Leaving the seraphs ranged in flaming tiers,
Winged his dark way through those unpinioned spheres,
And on the void's black beetling edge, alone,
Stood with raised wings, and listened for the tone
Of God's command to reach his eager ears,
While Chaos wavered, for she felt her years
Unsceptred now in that convulsive zone.
Night trembled. And, as one hath oft beheld
A lamp lit in a vase light up its gloom,

So God's voice lighted him, from heel to plume:
Let there be Light, It said, and Darkness, quelled,
Shrunk noiseless backward in her monstrous womb
Through vasts unwinnowed by the wings of eld!

JOHN BANISTER TABB (1845-1928)

CLOVER

Little masters, hat in hand,
Let me in your presence stand
Till your silence solve for me
This your threefold mystery.

Tell me—for I long to know—
How, in darkness there below,
Was your fairy fabric spun,
Spread, and fashioned, three in one.

Did your gossips gold and blue,
Sky and Sunshine, choose for you,
Ere your triple forms were seen,
Suited liveries of green?

Can ye—if ye dwelt indeed
Captives of a prison seed—
Like the Genie, once again
Get you back into the grain?

Little masters, may I stand
In your presence, hat in hand,
Waiting till you solve for me
This your threefold mystery?

THE WIND

Now, in his joy,
A whistling boy;

Now, sombre and defiant,
His every breath
A threat of death,
A blind, demented giant.

MATER DOLOROSA

Again maturnal Autumn grieves,
As blood-like drip the maple leaves
On Nature's Cavalry,
And every sap-forsaken limb
Renews the mystery of Him
Who died upon a Tree.

THE TEST

The dead there are, who live;
The living, who are dead;
The poor, who still can give;
The rich, who lack for bread;
To love it is and love alone
That life or luxury is known.

EVOLUTION

Out of the dusk a shadow,
Then a spark;
Out of the cloud a silence,
Then a lark;

Out of the heart a rapture,
Then a pain;
Out of the dead, cold ashes,
Life again.

John Banister Tabb

BROTHER ASS AND ST. FRANCIS

It came to pass
That "Brother Ass"
(As he his Body named),
Unto the Saint
Thus made complaint:
"I am unjustly blamed.

"Whate'er I do,
Like Balaam you
Requite me with a blow,
As for offence
To recompense
An ignominious foe.

"God made us one,
And I have done
No wickedness alone;
Nor can I do
Apart, as you,
An evil all my own.

"If Passion stir,
'Tis you that spur
My frenzy to the goal;
Then be the blame
Where sits the shame,
Upon the goading soul.

"Should one or both
Be blind or loth
Our brotherhood to see,
Remember this,
You needs must miss
Or enter heaven through *me*."

To this complaint
The lowly saint
In tears replied, "Alas,
If so it be,
God punish me
And bless thee, Brother Ass."

EMMA LAZARUS (1849-1887)

VENUS OF THE LOUVRE

Down the long hall she glistens like a star,
The foam-born mother of Love, transfixed to stone,
Yet none the less immortal, breathing on.
Time's brutal hand hath maimed but could not mar,
When first the enthralled enchantress from afar
Dazzled mine eyes, I saw not her alone,
Serenely poised on her world-worshipped throne,
As when she guided once her doze-drawn car,—
But at her feet a pale, death-stricken Jew,
Her life adorer, sobbed farewell to love.
Here *Heine* wept! Here still he weeps anew,
Nor ever shall his shadow lift or move,
While mourns one ardent heart, one poet-brain,
For vanished Hellas and Hebraic pain.

THE NEW EZEKIEL

What, can these dead bones live, whose sap is dried
By twenty scorching centuries of wrong?
Is this the House of Israel, whose pride
Is as a tale that's told, an ancient song?
Are these ignoble relics all that live
Of psalmist, priest, and prophet? Can the breath
Of very heaven bid these bones revive,
Open the graves and clothe the ribs of death?

Yea, Prophesy, the Lord hath said. Again
Say to the wind, Come forth and breathe afresh,
Even that they may live upon these slain,
And bone to bone shall leap, and flesh to flesh.
The Spirit is not dead, proclaim the word,
Where lay dead bones, a host of armed men stand!
I ope your graves, my people, saith the Lord,
And I shall place you living in your land.

JOHN VANCE CHENEY (1848-1922)

THE HAPPIEST HEART

Who drives the horses of the sun
Shall lord it but a day;
Better the lowly deed were done,
And kept the humble way.

The rust will find the sword of fame,
The dust will hide the crown;
Ay, none shall nail so high his name
Time will not tear it down.

The happiest heart that ever beat
Was in some quiet breast
That found the common daylight sweet,
And left to Heaven the rest.

EDGAR FAWCETT (1847-1904)

FIREFLIES

I saw, one sultry night above a swamp,
The darkness throbbing with their golden pomp!
And long my dazzled sight did they entrance
With the weird chaos of their dizzy dance!
Quicker than yellow leaves, when gales despoil,
Quivered the brilliance of their mute turmoil,

Within whose light was intricately blent
Perpetual rise, perpetual descent.
As though their scintillant flickerings had met
In the vague meshes of some airy net!
And now mysteriously I seemed to guess,
While watching their tumultuous loveliness,
What fervor of deep passion strangely thrives
In the warm richness of those tragic lives,
Whose wings can never tremble but they show
Those hearts of living fire that beat below!

WALTER LEARNED (1847-1915)

TO CRITICS

When I was seventeen I heard
From each censorious tongue,
"I'd not do that if I were you;
You see you're rather young."

Now that I number forty years,
I'm quite as often told
Of this or that I shouldn't do
Because I'm quite too old.

O carping world! If there's an age
Where youth and manhood keep
An equal poise, alas! I must
Have passed it in my sleep.

CHARLES EDWARD CARRYL
(1842-1920)

THE PLAINT OF THE CAMEL

"Canary-birds feed on sugar and seed,
Parrots have crackers to crunch;
And as for the poodles, they tell me the noodles
Have chickens and cream for their lunch.
But there's never a question
About *my* digestion—
Anything does for me!

"Cats, you're aware, can repose in a chair,
Chickens can roost upon rails;
Puppies are able to sleep in a stable,
And oysters can slumber in pails.
But no one supposes
A poor Camel dozes—
Any place does for me!

"Lambs are enclosed where it's never exposed,
Coops are constructed for hens;
Kittens are treated to houses well heated,
And pigs are protected by pens.
But a Camel comes handy
Wherever it's sandy—
Anywhere does for me!

"People would laugh if you rode a giraffe,
Or mounted the back of an ox;
It's nobody's habit to ride on a rabbit,
Or try to bestraddle a fox.
But as for a Camel, he's
Ridden by families—
Any load does for me!

"A snake is as round as a hole in the ground;
Weasels are wavy and sleek;
And no alligator could ever be straighter
Than lizards that live in a creek.
But a Camel's all lumpy
And bumpy and humpy—
Any shape does for me!"

GUY WETMORE CARRYL (1873-1904)

THE SYCOPHANTIC FOX AND THE GULLIBLE RAVEN

A raven sat upon a tree,
And not a word he spoke, for
His beak contained a piece of Brie,
Or, maybe, it was Roquefort.
We'll make it any kind you please—
At all events it was a cheese.

Beneath the tree's umbrageous limb
A hungry fox sat smiling;
He saw the raven watching him,
And spoke in words beguiling:
"*J'admire,*" said he, "*ton beau plumage,*"
(The which was simply persiflage.)

Two things there are, no doubt you know,
To which a fox is used:
A rooster that is bound to crow,
A crow that's bound to roost;
And whichsoever he espies
He tells the most unblushing lies.

"Sweet fowl," he said, "I understand
You're more than merely natty,
I hear you sing to beat the band
And Adelina Patti.
Pray render with your liquid tongue
A bit from 'Götterdämmerung.' "

This subtle speech was aimed to please
  The crow, and it succeeded;
He thought no bird in all the trees
  Could sing as well as he did.
    In flattery completely doused,
    He gave the "Jewel Song" from "Faust."

But gravitation's law, of course,
  As Isaac Newton showed it,
Exerted on the cheese its force,
  And elsewhere soon bestowed it.
    In fact, there is no need to tell
    What happened when to earth it fell.

I blush to add that when the bird
  Took in the situation
He said one brief, emphatic word,
  Unfit for publication.
    The fox was greatly startled, but
    He only sighed and answered "Tut."

The Moral is: A fox is bound
  To be a shameless sinner.
And also: When, the cheese comes round
  You know it's after dinner.
    But (what is only known to few)
    The fox is after dinner, too.

HENRY CUYLER BUNNER (1855-1896)

SHAKE, MULLEARY AND GO-ETHE

I have a bookcase, which is what
Many much better men have not.
There are no books inside, for books,
I am afraid, might spoil its looks.

But I've three busts, all second-hand,
Upon the top. You understand
I could not put them underneath—
Shake, Mulleary and Go-ethe.

Shake was a dramatist of note;
He lived by writing things to quote.
He long ago put on his shroud;
Some of his works are rather loud.
His bald spot's dusty, I suppose.
I know there's dust upon his nose.
I'll have to give each nose a sheath—
Shake, Mulleary and Go-ethe.

Mulleary's line was quite the same;
He has more hair, but far less fame.
I would not from that fame retrench—
But he is foreign, being French.
Yet high his haughty head he heaves,
The only one done up in leaves,
They're rather limited on wreath—
Shake, Mulleary and Go-ethe.

Go-ethe wrote in the German tongue:
He must have learned it very young.
His nose is quite a butt for scoff,
Although an inch of it is off.
He did quite nicely for the Dutch;
But here he doesn't count for much.
They all are off their native heath—
Shake, Mulleary and Go-ethe.

They sit there, on their chests, as bland
As if they were not second-hand.
I do not know of what they think,
Nor why they never frown or wink.
But why from smiling they refrain
I think I clearly can explain:

They none of them could show much teeth—
Shake, Mulleary and Go-ethe.

YOUNG EWING ALLISON (1853-)

THE DEAD MEN'S SONG

Fifteen men on the Dead Man's Chest,
  Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!
Drink and the devil had done for the rest,
  Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!
The mate was fixed by the bo'sun's pike
An' the bo'sun brained with a marlin-spike,
And the cookie's throat was marked belike
It had been clutched by fingers ten.
And there they lay, all good dead men,
Like break o' day in a boozin' ken—
  Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!

Fifteen men of the whole ship's list,
  Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!
Dead and bedamned and their souls gone whist,
  Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!
The skipper lay with his nob in gore
Where the scullion's axe his cheek had shore,
And the scullion he was stabbed times four;
And there they lay, and the soggy skies
Dripped ceaselessly in upstaring eyes,
By murk sunset and by foul sunrise—
  Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!

Fifteen men of 'em stiff and stark,
  Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!
Ten of the crew bore the murder mark,
  Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!
'Twas a cutlass swipe or an ounce of lead,
Or a gaping hole in a battered head,
And the scuppers' glut of a rotting red.

And there they lay, ay, damn my eyes,
Their lookouts clapped on Paradise,
Their souls gone just the contrawise—
  Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!

Fifteen men of 'em good and true,
  Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!
Every man Jack could 'a' sailed with Old Pew,
  Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!
There was chest on chest of Spanish gold
And a ton of plate in the middle hold,
And the cabin's riot of loot untold—
And there they lay that had took the plum,
With sightless eyes and with lips struck dumb,
And we shared all by rule o' thumb—
  Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!

More was seen through the stern light's screen,
  Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!
Chartings ondoubt where a woman had been,
  Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!
A flimsy shift on a bunker cot
With a dirk slit sheer through the bosom spot
And the lace stiff dry in a purplish rot—
Or was she wench or shuddering maid,
She dared the knife and she took the blade—
Faith, there was stuff for a plucky jade!
  Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!

Fifteen men on the Dead Man's Chest,
  Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!
Drink and the devil had done for the rest,
  Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!
We wrapped 'em all in a mainsail tight,
With twice ten turns of a hawser's bight,
And we heaved 'em over and out of sight,
With a yo-heave-ho and a fare-ye-well,
And a sullen plunge in a sullen swell,
Ten fathoms along on the road to hell—
  Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!

PART FIVE

EDWIN MARKHAM (1852-)

THE MAN WITH THE HOE

Bowed by the weight of centuries he leans
Upon his hoe and gazes on the ground,
The emptiness of ages in his face,
And on his back the burden of the world.
Who made him dead to rapture and despair,
A thing that grieves not and that never hopes,
Stolid and stunned, a brother to the ox?
Who loosened and let down this brutal jaw?
Whose was the hand that slanted back this brow?
Whose breath blew out the light within this brain?

Is this the Thing the Lord God made and gave
To have dominion over sea and land;
To trace the stars and search the heavens for power;
To feel the passion of Eternity?
Is this the dream He dreamed who shaped the suns
And marked their ways upon the ancient deep?
Down all the caverns of Hell to their last gulf
There is no shape more terrible than this—
More tongued with censure of the world's blind greed—
More filled with signs and portents for the soul—
More packt with danger to the universe.

What gulfs between him and the seraphim!
Slave of the wheel of labor, what to him
Are Plato and the swing of Pleiades?
What the long reaches of the peaks of song,
The rift of dawn, the reddening of the rose?
Through this dread shape the suffering ages look;
Time's tragedy is in that aching stoop;

Through this dread shape humanity betrayed,
Plundered, profaned, and disinherited,
Cries protest to the Judges of the World,
A protest that is also prophecy.

O masters, lords and rulers in all lands,
Is this the handiwork you give to God,
This monstrous thing distorted and soul-quenched?
How will you ever straighten up this shape;
Touch it again with immortality;
Give back the upward looking and the light;
Rebuild in it the music and the dream;
Make right the immemorial infamies,
Perfidious wrongs, immedicable woes?

O masters, lords and rulers in all lands,
How will the Future reckon with this man?
How answer his brute question in that hour
When whirlwinds of rebellion shake all shores?
How will it be with kingdoms and with kings—
With those who shaped him to the thing he is—
When this dumb terror shall rise to judge the world,
After the silence of the centuries?

OUTWITTED

He drew a circle that shut me out—
Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.
But Love and I had the wit to win:
We drew a circle that took him in!

CHARLES ERSKINE SCOTT WOOD
(1852-)

THE DESERT

She is a nun, withdrawing behind her veil;
Grey, mysterious, meditative, unapproachable.

Her body is tawny with the eagerness of the Sun
And her eyes are pools which shine in deep canyons.
She is a beautiful swart woman
With opals at her throat,
Rubies at her wrists
And topaz about her ankles.
Her breasts are like the evening and the day stars.

She sits upon her throne of light, proud and silent,
Indifferent to wooers.
The Sun is her servitor, and stars her attendants,
Running before her.
She sings a song unto her own ears,
Solitary but sufficient:
The song of her being.
She is a naked dancer, dancing upon
A pavement of porphyry and pearl,
Dazzling, so that the eyes must be shaded.
She wears the stars upon her bosom
And braids her hair with the constellations.

GEORGE EDWARD WOODBERRY
(1855-1930)

AT GIBRALTAR

I

England, I stand on thy imperial ground,
Not all a stranger; as thy bugles blow,
I feel within my blood old battles flow,—
The blood whose ancient founts in thee are found.
Still surging dark against the Christian bound
Wide Islam presses; well its peoples know
Thy heights that watch them wandering below;
I think how Lucknow heard their gathering sound.
I turn, and meet the cruel, turbaned face.
England, 'tis sweet to be so much thy son!

I feel the conqueror in my blood and race;
Last night Trafalgar awed me, and to-day
Gibraltar wakened; hark, thy evening gun
Startles the desert over Africa!

II

Thou art the rock of empire, set mid-seas
Between the East and West, that God has built;
Advance thy Roman borders where thou wilt,
While run thy armies true with his decrees;
Law, justice, liberty,—great gifts are these:
Watch that they spread where English blood is spilt,
Lest, mixed and sullied with his country's guilt,
The soldier's life-stream flow, and Heaven displease!
Two swords there are: one naked, apt to smite,
Thy blade of war; and, battle-storied, one
Rejoices in the sheath, and hides from light.
American I am; would wars were done!
Now westward, look, my country bids good-night—
Peace to the world from ports without a gun!

EDITH MATILDA THOMAS (1854-1925)

THE TEARS OF THE POPLARS

Hath not the dark stream closed above thy head,
With envy of thy light, thou shining one?
Hast thou not, murmuring, made thy dreamless bed
Where blooms the asphodel, far from all sun?
But thou—thou dost obtain oblivious ease,
While here we rock and moan—thy funeral trees.

Have we not flung our tresses on the stream?
Hath not thy friend, the snowy cygnet, grieved,
And ofttimes watched for thy returning beam,
With archëd neck—and ofttimes been deceived?
A thousand years, and yet a thousand more,
Hast thou been mourned upon this reedy shore.

How long, how long since, all the summer day,
Earth heard the heavens sound from pole to pole,
While legion clouds stood forth in bright array;
Yet no rain followed on the thunder's roll!
Beneath that glittering legion shrank the seas,
And fire unseen was borne upon the breeze.

The ground was smouldering fire beneath our tread,
The forest dropped the leaf, and failed all grass.
The souls of stricken men their bodies fled,
And, sighing, flocked the wind.—We heard them pass!
The priest, that scanned the portent of the skies,
Fell reeling back, with pierced and shrivelled eyes.

But ah, he saw not what our sight discerned—
The flying chariot-wheel, with fervid tire—
The steeds that unaccustomed guidance spurned
With fateful hoof and breath that scattered fire—
He saw not thee and thine unmeasured fall,
And Jove, unheeding, in his cloudy hall!

Dragged headlong by those swift immortal horse,
Up to our sire went thy vain cry for aid;
Neither he cast a bound, to check their course,
Nor on the golden rein a hand he laid.
Brother beloved, what foe could so deceive,
Bidding thee dare what scarcely gods achieve?

Alas! that we remember—and forget!
For, if we sometimes gain a brief repose,
Soon are we roused, by sudden fear beset;
Then, through our silver boughs a shudder goes,
Our heads we lift, we search the azure gloom,
As though thou still wert falling to thy doom!

Upon the earth no loves were ever ours;
Man greets us from afar, but comes not near,
Nor even round our dark unwindowed towers
Throng the light birds—so much our grief they fear!

We sigh—we tremble—'tis not to the breeze—
Brother beloved, we are thy funeral trees!

LIZETTE WOODWORTH REESE
(1856-)

A PURITAN LADY

Wild Carthage held her, Rome,
  Sidon. She stared to tears
Tall, golden Helen, wearying
  Behind the Trojan spears.

Towered Antwerp knew her well;
  She wore her quiet gown
In some hushed house in Oxford grass,
  Or lane in Salem town.

Humble and high in one,
  Cool, certain, different,
She lasts; scarce saint, yet half a child,
  As hard, as innocent.

What grave, long afternoons,
  What caged airs round her blown,
Stripped her of humor, left her bare
  As cloud, or wayside stone?

Made her as clear a thing,
  In this slack world as plain
As a white flower on a grave,
  Or sleet sharp at a pane?

THIS VERY HOUR

Master, this very hour,
  Under this village sky,
Between two thieves You go,
  To die.

About our separate work,
  Ever we come and pass;
One Pilate; Andrew one;
  One scarlet Caiaphas.

Peter stoops to his bulbs,
  Under a kitchen pane;
And James halts there to talk
  Of day's luck, field or rain.

Along some brambly wall,
  Where orange haws burn hot,
His thirty coins held fast,
  Goes dark Iscariot.

WILD CHERRY

Why make your lodging here in this spent lane,
Where but an old man, with his sheep each day,
Twice through the forgotten grass goes by your way,
Half sees you there, and not once looks again?
For you are of the very ribs of spring,
And should have many lovers, who have none.
In silver cloaks, in hushed troops down the sun
Should they draw near, oh, strange and lovely thing!
Beauty has no set weather, no sure place;
Her careful pageantries are here as there,
With nothing lost. And soon, some lad may start—
A strayed Mayer in this unremembered space—
At your tall white, and know you very fair,
Let all else go to roof within your heart.

HELEN GRAY CONE (1859-)

THE COMMON STREET

The common street climbed up against the sky,
Gray meeting gray; and wearily to and fro
I saw the patient common people go,
Each, with his sordid burden, trudging by.
And the rain dropped; there was not any sigh
Or stir of a live wind; dull, dull and slow
All motion; as a tale told long ago
The faded world; and creeping night drew nigh.

Then burst the sunset, flooding far and fleet,
Leavening the whole of life with magic leaven.
Suddenly down the long wet glistening hill
Pure splendor poured—and lo! the common street,
A golden highway into golden heaven,
With the dark shapes of men ascending still.

CHARLOTTE PERKINS STETSON GILMAN (1860-)

A COMMON INFERENCE

A night: mysterious, tender, quiet, deep;
Heavy with flowers; full of life asleep;
Thrilling with insect voices; thick with stars;
No cloud between the dewdrops and red Mars;
The small earth whirling softly on her way,
The moonbeams and the waterfalls at play;
A million million worlds that move in peace,
A million mighty laws that never cease;
And one small ant-heap, hidden by small weeds,
Rich with eggs, slaves, and store of millet seeds.
They sleep beneath the sod
And trust in God.

Charlotte Perkins Stetson Gilman

A day: all glorious, royal, blazing bright;
Heavy with flowers; full of life and light;
Great fields of corn and sunshine; courteous trees;
Snow-sainted mountains; earth-embracing seas;
Wide golden deserts; slender silver streams;
Clear rainbows where the tossing fountain gleams;
And everywhere, in happiness and peace,
A million forms of life that never cease;
And one small ant-heap, crushed by passing tread,
Hath scarce enough alive to mourn the dead!
They shriek beneath the sod,
"There is no God!"

LOUISE IMOGEN GUINEY (1861-1920)

TO A DOG'S MEMORY

The gusty morns are here,
When all the reeds ride low with level spear;
And on such nights as lured us far of yore,
Down rocky alleys yet, and through the pine,
The Hound-star and the pagan Hunter shine:
But I and thou, ah, field-fellow of mine,
Together roam no more.

Soft showers go laden now
With odours of the sappy orchard-bough,
And brooks begin to brawl along the march;
Steams the late frost from hollow sedges high;
The finch is come, the flame-blue dragon-fly,
The marsh-born marigold that children spy,
The plume upon the larch.

There is a music fills
The oaks of Belmont and the Wayland hills
Southward to Dewing's little bubbly stream,—
The heavenly weather's call! Oh, who alive
Hastes not to start, delays not to arrive,

Having free feet that never felt a gyve
Weigh, even in a dream?

But thou, instead, hast found
The sunless April uplands underground,
And still, wherever thou art, I must be.
My beautiful! arise in might and mirth,
(For we were tameless travellers from our birth);
Arise against thy narrow door of earth,
And keep the watch for me.

MONOCHROME

Shut fast again in Beauty's sheath
Where ancient forms renew,
The round world seems above, beneath,
One wash of faintest blue,

And air and tide so stilly sweet
In nameless union lie,
The little far-off fishing fleet
Goes drifting up the sky.

Secure of neither misted coast
Nor ocean undefined,
Our flagging sail is like the ghost
Of one that served mankind,

Who in the void, as we upon
This melancholy sea,
Finds labour and allegiance done,
And Self begin to be.

DORA READ GOODALE (1866-)

THE JUDGMENT

Thou hast done evil
And given place to the devil;

Yet so cunningly thou concealest
The thing which thou feelest,
That no eye espieth it,
Satan himself denieth it.
Go where it chooseth thee,
There is none that accuseth thee;
Neither foe nor lover
Will the wrong uncover;
The world's breath raiseth thee,
And thy own past praiseth thee.
Yet know thou this:
At quick of thy being
Is an eye all-seeing,
The snake's wit evadeth not,
The charmed lip persuadeth not;
So thoroughly it despiseth
The thing thy hand prizeth,
Though the sun were thy clothing,
It should count thee for nothing.
Thine own eye divineth thee,
Thine own soul arraigneth thee;
God himself cannot shrive thee
Till that judge forgive thee.

CLINTON SCOLLARD (1860-)

AS I CAME DOWN FROM LEBANON

As I came down from Lebanon,
Came winding, wandering slowly down
Through mountain passes bleak and brown,
The cloudless day was well-nigh done.
The city, like an opal set
In emerald, showed each minaret
Afire with radiant beams of sun,
And glistened orange, fig, and lime,
Where song-birds made melodious chime,
As I came down from Lebanon.

As I came down from Lebanon,
Like lava in the dying glow,
Through olive orchards far below
I saw the murmuring river run;
And 'neath the wall upon the sand
Swart sheiks from distant Samarcand,
With precious spices they had won,
Lay long and languidly in wait
Till they might pass the guarded gate,
As I came down from Lebanon.

As I came down from Lebanon,
I saw strange men from lands afar,
In mosque and square and gay bazar,
The Magi that the Moslem shun,
And Grave Effendi from Stamboul,
Who sherbet sipped in corners cool;
And, from the balconies o'errun
With roses, gleamed the eyes of those
Who dwell in still seraglios,
As I came down from Lebanon.

As I came down from Lebanon,
The flaming flower of daytime died,
And Night, arrayed as is a bride
Of some great king, in garments spun
Of purple and the finest gold,
Outbloomed in glories manifold,
Until the moon, above the dun
And darkening desert, void of shade,
Shone like a keen Damascus blade,
As I came down from Lebanon.

HARRIET MONROE (1860-)

THE HOTEL

The long resounding marble corridors, the shining parlors with shining women in them.

The French room, with its gilt and garlands under plump little tumbling painted Loves.

The Turkish room, with its jumble of many carpets and its stiffly squared un-Turkish chairs.

The English room, all heavy crimson and gold, with spreading palms lifted high in round green tubs.

The electric lights in twos and threes and hundreds, made into festoons and spirals and arabesques, a maze and magic of bright persistent radiance.

The people sitting in corners by twos and threes, and cooing together under the glare.

The long rows of silent people in chairs, watching with eyes that see not while the patient band tangles the air with music.

The bell-boys marching in with cards, and shouting names over and over into ears that do not heed.

The stout and gorgeous dowagers in lacy white and lilac, bedizened with many jewels, with smart little scarlet or azure hats on their gray-streaked hair.

The business men in trim and spotless suits, who walk in and out with eager steps, or sit at the desks and tables, or watch the shining women.

The telephone girls forever listening to far voices, with the silver band over their hair and the little black caps obliterating their ears.

The telegraph tickers sounding their perpetual chit-chit-chit from the uttermost ends of the earth.

The waiters, in black swallow-tails and white aprons, passing here and there with trays of bottles and glasses.

The quiet and sumptuous bar-room, with purplish men softly drinking in little alcoves, while the barkeeper, mixing bright liquors, is rapidly plying his bottles.

The great bedecked and gilded café, with its glitter of a thousand mirrors, with its little white tables bearing gluttonous dishes whereto bright forks, held by pampered hands, flicker daintily back and forth.

The white-tiled immaculate kitchen, with many little round blue fires, where white-clad cooks are making spiced and flavored dishes.

The cool cellars filled with meats and fruits, or layered with sealed and bottled wines mellowing softly in the darkness.

The invisible stories of furnaces and machines, burrowing deep down into the earth, where grimy workmen are heavily laboring.

The many-windowed stories of little homes and shelters and sleeping-places, reaching up into the night like some miraculous high-piled honey-comb of wax-white cells.

The clothes inside of the cells—the stuffs, the silks, the laces; the elaborate delicate disguises that wait in trunks and drawers and closets, or bedrape and conceal human flesh.

The people inside of the clothes, the bodies white and young, bodies fat and bulging, bodies wrinkled and wan, all alike veiled by fine fabrics, sheltered by walls and roofs, shut in from the sun and stars.

The souls inside of the bodies—the naked souls; souls weazen and weak, or proud and brave; all imprisoned in flesh, wrapped in woven stuffs, enclosed in thick and painted masonry, shut away with many shadows from the shining truth.

God inside of the souls, God veiled and wrapped and imprisoned and shadowed in fold on fold of flesh and fabrics and mockeries; but ever alive, struggling and rising again, seeking the light, freeing the world.

HAMLIN GARLAND (1860-)

A TRIBUTE OF GRASSES

(*To W. W.*)

Serene, vast head, with silver cloud of hair
Lined on the purple dusk of death,
A stern medallion, velvet set—
Old Norseman, throned, not chained upon thy chair,
Thy grasp of hand, thy hearty breath
Of welcome thrills me yet
As when I faced thee there!

Loving my plain as thou thy sea,
Facing the East as thou the West,
I bring a handful of grass to thee—
The prairie grasses I know the best;
Type of the wealth and width of the plain,
Strong of the strength of the wind and sleet,
Fragrant with sunlight and cool with rain,
I bring it and lay it low at thy feet,
Here by the eastern sea.

THE GIFT OF WATER

"Is water nigh?"
The plainsmen cry,
As they meet and pass in the desert grass.
With finger tip
Across the lip
I ask the sombre Navajo.
The brown man smiles and answers "Sho!"
With fingers high, he signs the miles
To the desert spring,
And so we pass in the dry dead grass,
Brothers in bond of the water's ring.

RICHARD BURTON (1861-)

WOOD WITCHERY

The way ran under boughs of checkered green
Where live things stirred, and sweet lights glinted through,
And airs were cool and scented; well I knew
It was New England, but this fresh demesne
Was full of fabled folk no eye hath seen
Yet every poet's heart must take for true:
Dryads and hamadryads, satyrs, too,
And fountain nymphs, and trolls of freakish mien.
Then, like a flash, the oneness of the world
Broke on me; mythland was not here or there,
But wheresoe'er shy fancy had unfurled
Her wings, perceiving Nature young and fair;
New England spelt but Arcady, the same
Unaging beauty by another name.

DESERTED FARMS

Aforetime, fruitfulness and tilth were here.
Snug granges held the harvests, acres broad
Were rich in grass and grain; the goodman's board
Groaned with its plenty, and a rustic cheer
Sat in the homesteads sprinkled far and near.
To-day, prosperity no more is lord;
Choked wells, roofs fallen, weed-grown ways afford
A vision desolate and a memory drear.
Sons of New England, your ingratitude,
Like that once shown to tragic Lear, is base!
For now ye scorn the teeming mother-breast
That gave you strength, and in a vagrant mood
Will turn to alien meadows of the West,
Or toward the peopled cities set your face.

Richard Burton

THE COMFORT OF THE STARS

When I am overmatched by petty cares
And things of earth loom large, and look to be
Of moment, how it soothes and comforts me
To step into the night and feel the airs

Of heaven fan my cheek; and, best of all,
Gaze up into those all-uncharted seas
Where swim the stately planets: such as these
Make mortal fret seem light and temporal.

I muse on what of Life may stir among
Those spaces knowing naught of metes nor bars;
Undreamed-of dramas played in outmost stars,
And lyrics by archangels grandly sung.

I grow familiar with the solar runes
And comprehend of worlds the mystic birth:
Ringed Saturn, Mars, whose fashion apes the earth,
And Jupiter, the giant, with his moons.

Then, dizzy with the unspeakable sights above,
Rebuked by Vast on Vast, my puny heart
Is greatened for its transitory part,
My trouble merged in wonder and in love.

ROLL A ROCK DOWN

From "Songs of the Trail," by H. H. Knibbs. Reprinted by Special Permission of Houghton, Mifflin Company.

Oh, out in the West where the riders are ready,
They sing an old song and they tell an old tale,
And its moral is plain: Take it easy, go steady,
While riding a horse on the Malibu Trail.

It's a high, rocky trail with its switch-backs and doubles,
It has no beginning and never an end:
It's risky and rough and it's plumb full of troubles,
From Shifty—that's shale—up to Powder Cut Bend.

Old-timers will tell you the rangers who made it,
Sang "Roll a Rock Down" with a stiff upper lip,
And cussed all creation, but managed to grade it;
With a thousand-foot drop if a pony should slip.

Oh, the day it was wet and the sky it was cloudy,
The trail was as slick as an oil-rigger's pants,
When Ranger McCabe on his pony, Old Rowdy,
Came ridin' where walkin' was takin' a chance.

"Oh, Roll a Rock Down!" picks and shovels was clangin',
And Rowdy a-steppin' that careful and light,
When the edge it gave way and McCabe was left hangin'
Clean over the rim—with no bottom in sight.

I shook out a loop—bein' crowded for throwin';
I flipped a fair noose for a rope that was wet:
It caught just as Mac lost his holt and was goin',
And burned through my fingers: it's burnin' them yet.

For Ranger McCabe never knuckled to danger;
My pardner in camp, on the trail, or in town:
And he slid into glory, a true forest-ranger,
With: "Hell! I'm a-goin'! Just roll a rock down."

So, roll a rock down where a ranger is sleepin'
Aside of his horse below Powder Cut Bend:
I ride and I look where the shadows are creepin',
And roll a rock down—for McCabe was my friend.

I've sung you my song and I've told you my story,
And all that I ask when I'm done with the show,
Is, roll a rock down when I slide into glory,
And say that I went like a ranger should go.

RICHARD HOVEY (1864-1900)

Give a rouse, then, in the Maytime
For a life that knows no fear!
Turn night-time into day-time
With the sunlight of good cheer!

For it's always fair weather
When good fellows get together,
With a stein on the table and a good song ringing clear.

When the wind comes up from Cuba,
And the birds are on the wing,
And our hearts are patting juba
To the banjo of the spring,
Then it's no wonder whether
The boys will get together,
With a stein on the table and a cheer for everything.

For we're all frank-and-twenty
When the spring is in the air;
And we've faith and hope a-plenty,
And we've life and love to spare:
And it's birds of a feather
When we all get together,
With a stein on the table and a heart without a care.

For we know the world is glorious,
And the goal a golden thing,
And that God is not censorious
When his children have their fling;
And life slips its tether
When the boys get together,
With a stein on the table in the fellowship of spring.

UNMANIFEST DESTINY

To what new fates, my country, far
And unforeseen of foe or friend,
Beneath what unexpected star,
Compelled to what unchosen end,

Across the sea that knows no beach
The Admiral of Nations guides
Thy blind obedient keels to reach
The harbor where thy future rides!

The guns that spoke at Lexington
Knew not that God was planning then
The trumpet word of Jefferson
To bugle forth the rights of men.

To them that wept and cursed Bull Run,
What was it but despair and shame?
Who saw behind the cloud the sun?
Who knew that God was in the flame?

Had not defeat upon defeat,
Disaster on disaster come,
The slave's emancipated feet
Had never marched behind the drum.

There is a Hand that bends our deeds
To mightier issues than we planned,
Each son that triumphs, each that bleeds,
My country, serves Its dark command.

I do not know beneath what sky
Nor on what seas shall be thy fate;
I only know it shall be high,
I only know it shall be great.

GEORGE SANTAYANA (1863-)

ODES

I

Gathering the echoes of forgotten wisdom,
And mastered by a proud, adventurous purpose,
Columbus sought the golden shores of India
Opposite Europe.

He gave the world another world, and ruin
Brought upon blameless, river-loving nations,
Cursed Spain with barren gold, and made the Andes
Fiefs of Saint Peter;

While in the cheerless North the thrifty Saxon
Planted his corn, and, narrowing his bosom,
Made covenant with God, and by keen virtue
Trebled his riches.

What venture hast thou left us, bold Columbus?
What honour left thy brothers, brave Magellan?
Daily the children of the rich for pastime
Circle the planet.

And what good comes to us of all your dangers?
A smaller earth and smaller hope of heaven.
Ye have but cheapened gold, and, measuring ocean,
Counted the islands.

No Ponce de Leon shall drink in fountains,
On any flowering Easter, youth eternal;
No Cortes look upon another ocean;
No Alexander

Found in the Orient dim a boundless kingdom,
And, clothing his Greek strength with barbarous splendour,
Build by the sea his throne, while Sacred Egypt
Honours his godhead.

The earth, the mother once of godlike Theseus
And mighty Heracles, at length is weary,
And now brings forth a spawn of antlike creatures,
Blackening her valleys,

Inglorious in their birth and in their living,
Curious and querulous, afraid of battle,
Rummaging earth for coals, in camps of hovels
Crouching from winter,

As if grim fate, amid our boastful prating,
Made us the image of our brutish fathers,
When from their caves they issued, crazed with terror,
Howling and hungry.

For all things come about in sacred cycles,
And life brings death, and light eternal darkness;
And now the world grows old apace; its glory
Passes for ever.

Perchance the earth will yet for many ages
Bear her dead child, the moon, around her orbit;
Strange craft may tempt the ocean streams, new forests
Cover the mountains.

If in those latter days men still remember
Our wisdom and our travail and our sorrow,
They never can be happy, with that burden
Heavy upon them,

Knowing the hideous past, the blood, the famine,
The ancestral hate, the eager faith's disaster,
All ending in their little lives, and vulgar
Circle of troubles.

But if they have forgot us, and the shifting
Of sands has buried deep our thousand cities,
Fell superstition then will seize upon them;
Protean error,

Will fill their panting heart with sickly phantoms
Of sudden blinding good and monstrous evil;
There will be miracles again, and torment,
Dungeon and fagot,—

Until the patient earth, made dry and barren,
Sheds all her herbage in a final winter,
And the gods turn their eyes to some far distant
Bright constellation.

II

Of thee the Northman by his bleachèd galley
Dreamt, as he watched the never-setting Ursa
And longed for summer and thy light, O sacred
Mediterranean.

Unseen he loved thee; for the heart within him
Knew earth had gardens where he might be blessed,
Putting away long dreams and aimless, barbarous
Hunger for battle.

The foretaste of thy languors thawed his bosom;
A great need drove him to thy caverned islands
From the gray, endless reaches of the outer
Desert of ocean.

He saw thy pillars, saw thy sudden mountains
Wrinkled and stark, and in their crooked gorges,
'Neath peeping pine and cypress, guessed the torrent
Smothered in flowers.

Thine incense to the sun, thy gathered vapours,
He saw suspended on the flanks of Taurus,
Or veiling the snowed bosom of the virgin
Sister of Atlas.

He saw the luminous top of wide Olympus,
Fit for the happy gods; he saw the pilgrim
River, with rains of Ethiopia flooding
Populous Egypt.

And having seen, he loved thee. His racked spirit,
By thy breath tempered and the light that clothes thee,
Forgot the monstrous gods, and made of Nature
Mistress and mother.

The more should I, O fatal sea, before thee
Of alien words make echoes to thy music;
For I was born where first the rills of Tagus
Turn to the westward.

And wandering long, alas! have need of drinking
Deep of the patience of thy perfect sadness,
O thou that constant through the change of ages,
Beautiful ever,

Never wast wholly young and void of sorrows,
Nor ever canst be old, while yet the morning
Kindles thy ripples, or the golden evening
Dyes thee in purple.

Thee, willing to be tamed but still untamable,
The Roman called his own until he perished,
As now the busy English hover o'er thee,
Stalwart and noble;

But all is naught to thee, while no harsh winter
Congeals thy fountains, and the blown Sahara
Chokes not with dreadful sand thy deep and placid
Rock-guarded havens.

Thou carest not what men may tread thy margin;
Nor I, while from some heather-scented headland
I may behold thy beauty, the eternal
Solace of mortals.

MADISON CAWEIN (1865-1914)

THE MAN HUNT

The woods stretch wild to the mountain side,
And the brush is deep where a man may hide.

They have brought the bloodhounds up again
To the roadside rock where they found the slain.

They have brought the bloodhounds up, and they
Have taken the trail to the mountain way.

Three times they circled the trail and crossed,
And thrice they found it and thrice they lost.

Now straight through the pines and the underbrush
They follow the scent through the forest's hush.

And their deep-mouthed bay is a pulse of fear
In the heart of the wood that the man must hear.

The man who crouches among the trees
From the stern-faced men that follow these.

A huddle of rocks that the ooze has mossed—
And the trail of the hunted again is lost.

An upturned pebble; a bit of ground
A heel has trampled—the trail is found.

And the woods re-echo the bloodhounds' bay
As again they take to the mountain way.

A rock; a ribbon of road; a ledge,
With a pine-tree clutching its crumbling edge.

A pine, that the lightning long since clave,
Whose huge roots hollow a ragged cave.

A shout; a curse; and a face aghast,
And the human quarry is laired at last.

The human quarry, with clay-clogged hair
And eyes of terror, who waits them there;

That glares and crouches and rising then
Hurls clods and curses at dogs and men.

Until the blow of a gun-butt lays
Him stunned and bleeding upon his face.

A rope, a prayer, and an oak-tree near.
And a score of hands to swing him clear.

A grim black thing for the setting sun
And the moon and the stars to look upon.

WILLIAM VAUGHN MOODY
(1869-1910)

THE QUARRY

Between the rice swamps and the fields of tea
I met a sacred elephant, snow-white.
Upon his back a huge pagoda towered
Full of brass gods and food of sacrifice.
Upon his forehead sat a golden throne,
The massy metal twisted into shapes
Grotesque, antediluvian, such as move
In myth or have their broken images
Sealed in the stony middle of the hills.
A peacock spread his thousand dyes to screen
The yellow sunlight from the head of one
Who sat upon the throne, clad stiff with gems,
Heirlooms of dynasties of buried kings,—
Himself the likeness of a buried king,
With frozen gesture and unfocused eyes.
The trappings of the beast were over-scrawled
With broideries—sea-shapes and flying things,
Fan-trees and dwarfed nodosities of pine,
Mixed with old alphabets, and faded lore
Fallen from ecstatic mouths before the Flood,
Or gathered by the daughters when they walked
Eastward in Eden with the Sons of God
Whom love and the deep moon made garrulous.
Between the carven tusks his trunk hung dead;
Blind as the eyes of pearl in Buddha's brow
His beaded eyes stared thwart upon the road;
And feebler than the doting knees of eld,
His joints, of size to swing the builder's crane
Across the war-walls of the Anakim,
Made vain and shaken haste. Good need was his
To hasten: panting, foaming, on the slot
Came many brutes of prey, their several hates
Laid by until the sharing of the spoil.

Just as they gathered stomach for the leap,
The sun was darkened, and wide-balanced wings
Beat downward on the trade-wind from the sea.
A wheel of shadow sped along the fields
And o'er the dreaming cities. Suddenly
My heart misgave me, and I cried aloud,
"Alas! What dost thou here? What dost *thou* here?"
The great beasts and the little halted sharp,
Eyed the grand circler, doubting his intent.
Straightway the wind flawed and he came about,
Stooping to take the vanward of the pack;
Then turned, between the chasers and the chased,
Crying a word I could not understand,—
But stiller-tongued, with eyes somewhat askance,
They settled to the slot and disappeared.

THE DAGUERREOTYPE

This, then, is she,
My mother as she looked at seventeen,
When she first met my father. Young incredibly,
Younger than spring, without the faintest trace
Of disappointment, weariness, or tean
Upon the childlike earnestness and grace
Of the waiting face.
These close-wound ropes of pearl
(Or common beads made precious by their use)
Seem heavy for so slight a throat to wear,
But the low bodice leaves the shoulders bare
And half the glad swell of the breast, for news
That now the woman stirs within the girl.
And yet,
Even so, the loops and globes
Of beaten gold
And jet
Hung, in the stately way of old,
From the ears' drooping lobes
On festivals and Lord's-day of the week,

Show all too matron-sober for the cheek,—
Which, now I look again, is perfect child,
Or no—or no—'tis girlhood's very self,
Moulded by some deep, mischief-ridden elf
So meek, so maiden mild,
But startling the close gazer with the sense
Of passions forest-shy and forest-wild,
And delicate delirious merriments.

As a moth beats sidewise
And up and over, and tries
To skirt the irresistible lure
Of the flame that has him sure,
My spirit, that is none too strong to-day,
Flutters and makes delay,—
Pausing to wonder on the perfect lips,
Lifting to muse upon the low-drawn hair
And each hid radiance there,
But powerless to stem the tide-race bright,
The vehement peace which drifts it toward the light
Where soon—ah, now, with cries
Of grief and giving-up unto its gain
It shrinks no longer nor denies,
But dips
Hurriedly home to the exquisite heart of pain,—
And all is well, for I have seen them plain,
The unforgettable, the unforgotten eyes!
Across the blinding gush of these good tears
They shine as in the sweet and heavy years
When by her bed and chair
We children gathered jealously to share
The sunlit aura breathing myrrh and thyme,
Where the sore-stricken body made a clime
Gentler than May and pleasanter than rhyme,
Holier and more mystical than prayer.

God, how thy ways are strange!
That this should be, even this,
The patient head
Which suffered years ago the dreary change!
That these so dewy lips should be the same
As those I stooped to kiss
And heard my harrowing half-spoken name,
A little ere the one who bowed above her,
Our father and her very constant lover,
Rose stoical, and we knew that she was dead.
Then I, who could not understand or share
His antique nobleness,
Being unapt to bear
The insults which time flings us for our proof,
Fled from the horrible roof
Into the alien sunshine merciless,
The shrill satiric fields ghastly with day,
Raging to front God in his pride of sway
And hurl across the lifted swords of fate
That ringed Him where He sat
My puny gage of scorn and desolate hate
Which somehow should undo Him, after all!
That this girl face, expectant, virginal,
Which gazes out at me
Boon as a sweetheart, as if nothing loth
(Save for the eyes, with other presage stored)
To pledge me troth,
And in the kingdom where the heart is lord
Take sail on the terrible gladness of the deep
Whose winds the grey Norns keep,—
That this should be indeed
The flesh which caught my soul, a flying seed,
Out of the to and fro
Of scattering hands where the seedsman Mage,
Stooping from star to star and age to age
Sings as he sows!

That underneath this breast
Nine moons I fed
Deep of divine unrest,
While over and over in the dark she said,
"Blessèd! but not as happier children blessed"—
That this should be
Even she. . . .
God, how with time and change
Thou makest thy footsteps strange!
Ah, now I know
They play upon me, and it is not so.
Why, 'tis a girl I never saw before,
A little thing to flatter and make weep,
To tease until her heart is sore,
Then kiss and clear the score;
A gypsy run-the-fields,
A little liberal daughter of the earth,
Good for what hour of truancy and mirth
The careless season yields
Hither-side the flood of the year and yonder of the neap;
Then thank you, thanks again, and twenty light good-byes.—
O shrined above the skies,
Frown not, clear brow,
Darken not, holy eyes!
Thou knowest well I know that it is thou!
Only to save me from such memories
As would unman me quite,
Here in this web of strangeness caught
And prey to troubled thought
Do I devise
These foolish shifts and slight;
Only to shield me from the afflicting sense
Of some waste influence
Which from this morning face and lustrous hair
Breathes on me sudden ruin and despair.
In any other guise,
With any but this girlish depth of gaze,

Your coming had not so unsealed and poured
The dusty amphoras where I had stored
The drippings of the winepress of my days.
I think these eyes foresee,
Now in their unawakened virgin time,
Their mother's pride in me,
And dream even now, unconsciously,
Upon each soaring peak and sky-hung lea
You pictured I should climb.
Broken premonitions come,
Shapes, gestures visionary,
Not as once to maiden Mary
The manifest angel with fresh lilies came
Intelligibly calling her by name;
But vanishingly, dumb,
Thwarted and bright and wild,
As heralding a sin-defiled,
Earth-encumbered, blood-begotten, passionate man-child,
Who yet should be a trump of mighty call
Blown in the gates of evil kings
To make them fall;
Who yet should be a sword of flame before
The soul's inviolate door
To beat away the clang of hellish wings;
Who yet should be a lyre
Of high unquenchable desire
In the day of little things.—
Look, where the amphoras,
The yield of many days,
Trod by my hot soul from the pulp of self
And set upon the shelf
In sullen pride
The Vineyard-master's tasting to abide—
O mother mine!
Are these the bringings-in, the doings fine,
Of him you used to praise?

Emptied and overthrown
The jars lie strown.
These, for their flavor duly nursed,
Drip from the stopples vinegar accursed;
These, I thought honied to the very seal,
Dry, dry,—a little acid meal,
A pinch of mouldy dust,
Sole leavings of the amber-mantling must;
These, rude to look upon,
But flasking up the liquor dearest won,
Through sacred hours and hard,
With watching and with wrestlings and with grief,
Even of these, of these in chief,
The stale breath sickens, reeking from the shard.
Nothing is left. Ay, how much less than naught!
What shall be said or thought
Of the slack hours and waste imaginings,
The cynic rending of the wings,
Known to that froward, that unreckoning heart
Whereof this brewage was the precious part,
Treasured and set away with furtive boast?
O dear and cruel ghost,
Be merciful, be just!
See, I was yours and I am in the dust.
Then look not so, as if all things were well!
Take your eyes from me, leave me to my shame,
Or else, if gaze they must,
Steel them with judgment, darken them with blame;
But by the ways of light ineffable
You bade me go and I have faltered from,
By the low waters moaning out of hell
Whereto my feet have come,
Lay not on me these intolerable
Looks of rejoicing love, of pride, of happy trust!

Nothing dismayed?
By all I say and all I hint not made

Afraid?
O then, stay by me! Let
These eyes afflict me, cleanse me, keep me yet,
Brave eyes and true!
See how the shriveled heart, that long has lain
Dead to delight and pain,
Stirs, and begins again
To utter pleasant life, as if it knew
The wintry days were through;
As if in its awakening boughs it heard
The quick, sweet-spoken bird.
Strong eyes and brave,
Inexorable to save!

GEORGE STERLING (1869-1926)

THE BLACK VULTURE

Aloof upon the day's immeasured dome,
He holds unshared the silence of the sky.
Far down his bleak, relentless eyes descry
The eagle's empire and the falcon's home—
Far down, the galleons of sunset roam;
His hazards on the sea of morning lie;
Serene, he hears the broken tempest sigh
Where cold sierras gleam like scattered foam.

And least of all he holds the human swarm—
Unwitting now that envious men prepare
To make their dream and its fulfillment one,
When, poised above the caldrons of the storm,
Their hearts, contemptuous of death, shall dare
His roads between the thunder and the sun.

OMNIA EXEUNT IN MYSTERIUM

The stranger in my gates—lo! that am I,
And what my land of birth I do not know,
Nor yet the hidden land to which I go.
One may be lord of many ere he die,
And tell of many sorrows in one sigh,
But know himself he shall not, nor his woe,
Nor to what sea the tears of wisdom flow;
Nor why one star is taken from the sky.

An urging is upon him evermore,
And though he bide, his soul is wanderer,
Scanning the shadows with a sense of haste—
Where fade the tracks of all who went before:
A dim and solitary traveler
On ways that end in evening and the waste.

THE LAST DAYS

The russet leaves of the sycamore
Lie at last on the valley floor—
By the autumn wind swept to and fro
Like ghosts in a tale of long ago.
Shallow and clear the Carmel glides
Where the willows droop on its vine-walled sides.

The bracken-rust is red on the hill;
The pines stand brooding, sombre and still;
Gray are the cliffs, and the waters gray,
Where the seagulls dip to the sea-born spray.
Sad November, lady of rain,
Sends the goose-wedge over again.

Wilder now, for the verdure's birth,
Falls the sunlight over the earth;

Kildees call from the fields where now
The banding blackbirds follow the plow;
Rustling poplar and brittle weed
Whisper low to the river-reed.

Days departing linger and sigh:
Stars come soon to the quiet sky;
Buried voices, intimate, strange,
Cry to body and soul of change;
Beauty, eternal fugitive,
Seeks the home that we cannot give.

TRUMBULL STICKNEY (1874-1904)

BE STILL. THE HANGING GARDENS WERE A DREAM

Be still. The Hanging Gardens were a dream
That over Persian roses flew to kiss
The curlèd lashes of Semiramis.
Troy never was, nor green Skamander stream.
Provence and Troubadour are merest lies,
The glorious hair of Venice was a beam
Made within Titian's eye. The sunsets seem,
The world is very old and nothing is.
Be still. Thou foolish thing, thou canst not wake,
Nor thy tears wedge thy soldered lids apart,
But patter in the darkness of thy heart.
Thy brain is plagued. Thou art a frighted owl
Blind with the light of life thou'ldst not forsake,
And error loves and nourishes thy soul.

LIVE BLINDLY

Live blindly and upon the hour. The Lord,
Who was the Future, died full long ago.
Knowledge which is the Past is folly. Go,
Poor child, and be not to thyself abhorred.

Around thine earth sun-wingèd winds do blow
And planets roll; a meteor draws his sword;
The rainbow breaks his seven-coloured chord
And the long strips of river-silver flow:
Awake! Give thyself to the lovely hours.
Drinking their lips, catch thou the dream in flight
About their fragile hairs' aërial gold.
Thou art divine, thou livest,—as of old
Apollo springing naked to the light,
And all his island shivered into flowers.

MT. LYKAION

Alone on Lykaion since man hath been
Stand on the height two columns, where at rest
Two eagles hewn of gold sit looking East
Forever; and the sun goes up between.
Far down around the mountain's oval green
An order keeps the falling stones abreast.
Below within the chaos last and least
A river like a curl of light is seen.
Beyond the river lies the even sea,
Beyond the sea another ghost of sky,—
O God, support the sickness of my eye
Lest the far space and long antiquity
Suck out my heart, and on this awful ground
The great wind kill my little shell with sound.

STEPHEN CRANE (1871-1900)

FROM "THE BLACK RIDERS"

I

A youth in apparel that glittered
Went to walk in a grim forest.
There he met an assassin
Attired all in garb of old days;

He, scowling through the thickets,
And dagger poised quivering,
Rushed upon the youth.
"Sir," said this latter,
"I am enchanted, believe me,
To die, thus,
In this mediæval fashion,
According to the best legends;
Ah, what joy!"
Then took he the wound, smiling,
And died, content.

II

Two or three angels
Came near to the earth.
They saw a fat church.
Little black streams of people
Came and went in continually.
And the angels were puzzled
To know why the people went thus,
And why they stayed so long within.

III

The sage lectured brilliantly.
Before him, two images:
"Now this one is a devil,
And this one is me."
He turned away.
Then a cunning pupil
Changed the positions.
Turned the sage again:
"Now this one is a devil,
And this one is me."
The pupils sat, all grinning,
And rejoiced in the game.
But the sage was a sage.

FROM "WAR IS KIND"

I

Do not weep, maiden, for war is kind.
Because your lover threw wild hands toward the sky
And the affrighted steed ran on alone,
Do not weep.
War is kind.

Hoarse, booming drums of the regiment,
Little souls who thirst for fight,
These men were born to drill and die.
The unexplained glory flies above them,
Great is the battle-god, great, and his kingdom—
A field where a thousand corpses lie.

Do not weep, babe, for war is kind.
Because your father tumbled in the yellow trenches,
Raged at his breast, gulped and died,
Do not weep.
War is kind.

Swift blazing flag of the regiment,
Eagle with crest of red and gold,
These men were born to drill and die.
Point for them the virtue of slaughter,
Make plain to them the excellence of killing
And a field where a thousand corpses lie.

Mother whose heart hung humble as a button
On the bright splendid shroud of your son,
Do not weep.
War is kind.

II

A little ink more or less!
It surely can't matter?

Even the sky and the opulent sea,
The plains and the hills, aloof,
Hear the uproar of all these books.
But it is only a little ink more or less.

What?
You define me God with these trinkets?
Can my misery meal on an ordered walking
Of surpliced numskulls?
And a fanfare of lights?
Or even upon the measured pulpitings
Of the familiar false and true?
Is this God?
Where, then, is hell?
Show me some bastard mushroom
Sprung from a pollution of blood.
It is better.

Where is God?

III

There was a land where lived no violets.
A traveller at once demanded: "Why?"
The people told him:
"Once the violets of this place spoke thus:
'Until some woman freely gives her lover
To another woman
We will fight in bloody scuffle.' "
Sadly the people added:
"There are no violets here."

IV

A man said to the universe:
"Sir, I exist!"
"However," replied the universe,
"The fact has not created in me
A sense of obligation."

PART SIX

EDWIN ARLINGTON ROBINSON
(1869-)

FLAMMONDE

The man Flammonde, from God knows where,
With firm address and foreign air,
With news of nations in his talk
And something royal in his walk,
With glint of iron in his eyes,
But never doubt, nor yet surprise,
Appeared, and stayed, and held his head
As one by kings accredited.

Erect, with his alert repose
About him, and about his clothes,
He pictured all tradition hears
Of what we owe to fifty years.
His cleansing heritage of taste
Paraded neither want nor waste;
And what he needed for his fee
To live, he borrowed graciously.

He never told us what he was,
Or what mischance, or other cause,
Had banished him from better days
To play the Prince of Castaways.
Meanwhile he played surpassing well
A part, for most, unplayable;
In fine, one pauses, half afraid
To say for certain that he played.

For that, one may as well forego
Convictions as to yes or no;

Nor can I say just how intense
Would then have been the difference
To several, who, having striven
In vain to get what he was given,
Would see the stranger taken on
By friends not easy to be won.

Moreover, many a malcontent
He soothed and found munificent;
His courtesy beguiled and foiled
Suspicion that his years were soiled;
His mien distinguished any crowd,
His credit strengthened when he bowed;
And women, young and old, were fond
Of looking at the man Flammonde.

There was a woman in our town
On whom the fashion was to frown;
But while our talk renewed the tinge
Of a long-faded scarlet fringe,
The man Flammonde saw none of that,
And what he saw we wondered at—
That none of us, in her distress,
Could hide or find our littleness.

There was a boy that all agreed
Had shut within him the rare seed
Of learning. We could understand,
But none of us could lift a hand.
The man Flammonde appraised the youth,
And told a few of us the truth;
And thereby, for a little gold,
A flowered future was unrolled.

There were two citizens who fought
For years and years, and over nought;
They made life awkward for their friends,
And shortened their own dividends.

The man Flammonde said what was wrong
Should be made right; nor was it long
Before they were again in line,
And had each other in to dine.

And these I mention are but four
Of many out of many more.
So much for them. But what of him—
So firm in every look and limb?
What small satanic sort of kink
Was in his brain? What broken link
Withheld him from the destinies
That came so near to being his?

What was he, when we came to sift
His meaning, and to note the drift
Of incommunicable ways
That make us ponder while we praise?
Why was it that his charm revealed
Somehow the surface of a shield?
What was it that we never caught?
What was he, and what was he not?

How much it was of him we met
We cannot ever know; nor yet
Shall all he gave us quite atone
For what was his, and his alone;
Nor need we now, since he knew best,
Nourish an ethical unrest:
Rarely at once will nature give
The power to be Flammonde and live.

We cannot know how much we learn
From those who never will return,
Until a flash of unforeseen
Remembrance falls on what has been.
We've each a darkening hill to climb;
And this is why, from time to time

In Tilbury Town, we look beyond
Horizons for the man Flammonde.

THE POOR RELATION

No longer torn by what she knows
And sees within the eyes of others,
Her doubts are when the daylight goes,
Her fears are for the few she bothers.
She tells them it is wholly wrong
Of her to stay alive so long;
And when she smiles her forehead shows
A crinkle that had been her mother's.

Beneath her beauty, blanched with pain,
And wistful yet for being cheated,
A child would seem to ask again
A question many times repeated;
But no rebellion has betrayed
Her wonder at what she has paid
For memories that have no stain,
For triumph born to be defeated.

To those who come for what she was—
The few left who know where to find her—
She clings, for they are all she has;
And she may smile when they remind her,
As heretofore, of what they know
Of roses that are still to blow
By ways where not so much as grass
Remains of what she sees behind her.

They stay a while, and having done
What penance or the past requires,
They go, and leave her there alone
To count her chimneys and her spires.
Her lip shakes when they go away,
And yet she would not have them stay;

She knows as well as anyone
That Pity, having played, soon tires.

But one friend always reappears,
A good ghost, not to be forsaken;
Whereat she laughs and has no fears
Of what a ghost may reawaken,
But welcomes, while she wears and mends
The poor relation's odds and ends,
Her truant from a tomb of years—
Her power of youth so early taken.

Poor laugh, more slender than her song
It seems; and there are none to hear it
With even the stopped ears of the strong
For breaking heart or broken spirit.
The friends who clamored for her place,
And would have scratched her for her face,
Have lost her laughter for so long
That none would care enough to fear it.

None live who need fear anything
From her, whose losses are their pleasure;
The plover with a wounded wing
Stays not the flight that others measure;
So there she waits, and while she lives,
And death forgets, and faith forgives,
Her memories go foraging
For bits of childhood song they treasure.

And like a giant harp that hums
On always, and is always blending
The coming of what never comes
With what has passed and had an ending,
The City trembles, throbs, and pounds
Outside, and through a thousand sounds
The small intolerable drums
Of Time are like slow drops descending.

Bereft enough to shame a sage
And given little to long sighing,
With no illusion to assuage
The lonely changelessness of dying,—
Unsought, unthought-of, and unheard,
She sings and watches like a bird,
Safe in a comfortable cage
From which there will be no more flying.

VETERAN SIRENS

The ghost of Ninon would be sorry now
To laugh at them, were she to see them here,
So brave and so alert for learning how
To fence with reason for another year.

Age offers a far comelier diadem
Than theirs; but anguish has no eye for grace,
When time's malicious mercy cautions them
To think a while of number and of space.

The burning hope, the worn expectancy,
The martyred humor, and the maimed allure,
Cry out for time to end his levity,
And age to soften its investiture;

But they, though others fade and are still fair,
Defy their fairness and are unsubdued;
Although they suffer, they may not forswear
The patient ardor of the unpursued.

Poor flesh, to fight the calendar so long;
Poor vanity, so quaint and yet so brave;
Poor folly, so deceived and yet so strong,
So far from Ninon and so near the grave.

THE GIFT OF GOD

Blessed with a joy that only she
Of all alive shall ever know,
She wears a proud humility
For what it was that willed it so,—
That her degree should be so great
Among the favored of the Lord
That she may scarcely bear the weight
Of her bewildering reward.

As one apart, immune, alone,
Or featured for the shining ones,
And like to none that she has known
Of other women's other sons,—
The firm fruition of her need,
He shines anointed; and he blurs
Her vision, till it seems indeed
A sacrilege to call him hers.

She fears a little for so much
Of what is best, and hardly dares
To think of him as one to touch
With aches, indignities, and cares;
She sees him rather at the goal,
Still shining; and her dream foretells
The proper shining of a soul
Where nothing ordinary dwells.

Perchance a canvass of the town
Would find him far from flags and shouts,
And leave him only the renown
Of many smiles and many doubts;
Perchance the crude and common tongue
Would havoc strangely with his worth;
But she, with innocence unwrung,
Would read his name around the earth.

And others, knowing how this youth
Would shine, if love could make him great,
When caught and tortured for the truth
Would only writhe and hesitate;
While she, arranging for his days
What centuries could not fulfill,
Transmutes him with her faith and praise,
And has him shining where she will.

She crowns him with her gratefulness,
And says again that life is good;
And should the gift of God be less
In him than in her motherhood,
His fame, though vague, will not be small,
As upward through her dream he fares,
Half clouded with a crimson fall
Of roses thrown on marble stairs.

EROS TURANNOS

She fears him, and will always ask
  What fated her to choose him;
She meets in his engaging mask
  All reasons to refuse him;
But what she meets and what she fears
Are less than are the downward years,
Drawn slowly to the foamless weirs
  Of age, were she to lose him.

Between a blurred sagacity
  That once had power to sound him,
And Love, that will not let him be
  The Judas that she found him,
Her pride assuages her almost,
As if it were alone the cost.—
He sees that he will not be lost,
  And waits and looks around him.

A sense of ocean and old trees
  Envelops and allures him;
Tradition, touching all he sees,
  Beguiles and reassures him;
And all her doubts of what he says
Are dimmed with what she knows of days—
Till even prejudice delays
  And fades, and she secures him.

The falling leaf inaugurates
  The reign of her confusion;
The pounding wave reverberates
  The dirge of her illusion;
And home, where passion lived and died,
Becomes a place where she can hide,
While all the town and harbor side
  Vibrate with her seclusion.

We tell you, tapping on our brows,
  The story as it should be,—
As if the story of a house
  Were told, or ever could be;
We'll have no kindly veil between
Her visions and those we have seen,—
As if we guessed what hers have been,
  Or what they are or would be.

Meanwhile we do no harm; for they
  That with a god have striven,
Not hearing much of what we say,
  Take what the god has given;
Though like waves breaking it may be,
Or like a changed familiar tree,
Or like a stairway to the sea
  Where down the blind are driven.

MR. FLOOD'S PARTY

Old Eben Flood, climbing alone one night
Over the hill between the town below
And the forsaken upland hermitage
That held as much as he should ever know
On earth again of home, paused warily.
The road was his with not a native near;
And Eben, having leisure, said aloud,
For no man else in Tilbury Town to hear:

"Well, Mr. Flood, we have the harvest moon
Again, and we may not have many more;
The bird is on the wing, the poet says,
And you and I have said it here before.
Drink to the bird." He raised up to the light
The jug that he had gone so far to fill,
And answered huskily: "Well, Mr. Flood,
Since you propose it, I believe I will."

Alone, as if enduring to the end
A valiant armor of scarred hopes outworn,
He stood there in the middle of the road
Like Roland's ghost winding a silent horn.
Below him, in the town among the trees,
Where friends of other days had honored him,
A phantom salutation of the dead
Rang thinly till old Eben's eyes were dim.

Then, as a mother lays her sleeping child
Down tenderly, fearing it may awake,
He set the jug down slowly at his feet
With trembling care, knowing that most things break;
And only when assured that on firm earth
It stood, as the uncertain lives of men
Assuredly did not, he paced away,
And with his hand extended paused again:

"Well, Mr. Flood, we have not met like this
In a long time; and many a change has come
To both of us, I fear, since last it was
We had a drop together. Welcome home!"
Convivially returning with himself,
Again he raised the jug up to the light;
And with an acquiescent quaver said:
"Well, Mr. Flood, if you insist, I might.

"Only a very little, Mr. Flood—
For auld lang syne. No more, sir; that will do."
So, for the time, apparently it did,
And Eben evidently thought so too;
For soon amid the silver loneliness
Of night he lifted up his voice and sang,
Secure, with only two moons listening,
Until the whole harmonious landscape rang—

"For auld lang syne." The weary throat gave out,
The last word wavered; and the song being done,
He raised again the jug regretfully
And shook his head, and was again alone.
There was not much that was ahead of him,
And there was nothing in the town below—
Where strangers would have shut the many doors
That many friends had opened long ago.

CALE YOUNG RICE (1872-)

KINCHINJUNGA

(*Which is the next highest of mountains*)

I

O white Priest of Eternity, around
Whose lofty summit veiling clouds arise
Of the earth's immemorial sacrifice
To Brahma in whose breath all lives and dies;

O Hierarach enrobed in timeless snows,
First-born of Asia whose maternal throes
Seem changed now to a million human woes,
Holy thou art and still! Be so, nor sound
One sigh of all the mystery in thee found.

II

For in this world too much is overclear,
Immortal Ministrant to many lands,
From whose ice-altars flow to fainting sands
Rivers that each libation poured expands.
Too much is known, O Ganges-giving sire!
Thy people fathom life and find it dire,
Thy people fathom death, and, in it, fire
To live again, though in Illusion's sphere,
Behold concealed as Grief is in a tear.

III

Wherefore continue, still enshrined, thy rites,
Though dark Thibet, that dread ascetic, falls
In strange austerity, whose trance appalls,
Before thee, and a suppliant on thee calls.
Continue still thy silence high and sure,
That something beyond fleeting may endure—
Something that shall forevermore allure
Imagination on to mystic flights
Wherein alone no wing of Evil lights.

IV

Yea, wrap thy awful gulfs and acolytes
Of lifted granite round with reachless snows.
Stand for Eternity while pilgrim rows
Of all the nations envy thy repose.
Ensheath thy swart sublimities, unscaled.
Be that alone on earth which has not failed.
Be that which never yet has yearned or ailed,
But since primeval Power upreared thy heights
Has stood above all deaths and all delights.

V

And though thy loftier Brother shall be King,
High-priest art thou to Brahma unrevealed,
While thy white sanctity forever sealed
In icy silence leaves desire congealed.
In ghostly ministrations to the sun,
And to the mendicant stars and the moon-nun,
Be holy still, till East to West has run,
And till no sacrificial suffering,
On any shrine is left to tell life's sting.

LEONORA SPEYER (1872-)

KLEPTOMANIAC

She stole his eyes because they shone,
Stole the good things they looked upon;
They were no brighter than her own.

She stole his mouth—her own was fair—
She stole his words, his songs, his prayer;
His kisses too, since they were there.

She stole the journeys of his heart—
Her own, their very counterpart—
His seas and sails, his course and chart.

She stole his strength so fierce and true,
Perhaps for something brave to do;
Wept at his weakness, stole that too.

But she was caught one early morn!
She stood red-handed and forlorn,
And stole his anger and his scorn.

Upon his knee she laid her head,
Refusing to be comforted;
"Unkind—unkind—" was all she said.

Denied she stole; confessed she did;
Glad of such plunder to be rid—
Clutching the place where it was hid.

As he forgave she snatched his soul;
She did not want it, but she stole.

OBERAMMERGAU

Rich man, poor man, beggar-man, thief,
Over the hills to the mountain folk,
Doctor, lawyer, merchant, chief,
Across the world they find their way;
Christ will be crucified to-day.

Christ will hang crowned, and we are here.
Villager, are there beds enough?
Soup and bread and a pot of beer?—
Weary Gentile, Turk and Jew,
Lord and peasant, Christian too.

. . . . .

Who called His Name? What was it spoke?
Perhaps I dreamed. Then my walls dreamed!
I saw them shaking as I woke;
The dawn turned silver harps, and there
The Star hung singing in the air.

"Rich man, rich man, drawing near,
Have you not heard of the needle's eye?
Beggar, whom do you follow here?
Did you give to the poor as He bade you do?
Proud sir, which of the thieves are you?

"Doctor, lawyer, whom do you seek?
Do you succor the needy and ask no fee?
Chief, will you turn the other cheek?
Merchant, there is a story grim
Of money-changers scourged by Him!"

The Star leaned lower from the sky:
"Oh men in holy orders dressed,
Hurrying so to see Him die,
Important, as becomes your creed,
Why bring you dogma for His need?"

. . . .

The streets of Oberammergau
Are waking now, are crowding now;
The Star has fallen like a tear;
There is a tree with a waiting bough
Not far from here.

Rich man, poor man, beggar and thief,
Over the hills to the mountain folk,
Doctor, lawyer, merchant, chief,
Magdalene, Mary great with grief,
And Martha walking heavily—

Doubter—dreamer—which am I?
Lord, help Thou mine unbelief!

GEORGE CABOT LODGE (1873-)

DAY AND DARK

Now the golden fields of sunset rose on rose to me-ward fall,
Down the dark reverberate beaches clear and far the sea-birds call,
Blue across the fire-stained waters, eastward thrusts the chuckling tide,
Fresh as when the immortal impulse took the lifeless world for bride.

Now the shore's thin verge of shallows keep the tense and tender light,
Now the stars hang few and faultless, diademed on the brows of night,

Now the moon's unstinted silver falls like dew along the sea
While from far a friendly casement softly fills with light for me.

So it ends! I reaped the harvest, lived the long and lavish day,
Saw the earliest sunlight shiver thro' the breakers' endless play,
Felt the noonday's warm abundance, shared the hours of large repose,
While the stately sun descended thro' the twilight's sumptuous close.

Now the night-fall—**Ah!** I guess the immortal secret, glimpse the goal,
Know the hours have scanted nothing, know each fragment hints the whole,
While the Soul in power and freedom dares and wills to claim its own,
Star over star, a larger, lovelier unknown heaven beyond the known!

JOSEPHINE PRESTON PEABODY
(1874-1922)

ISOLATION

O Brother Planets, unto whom I cry,
Know ye, in all the worlds, a gladder thing
Than this glad life of ours, this wandering
Among the eternal winds that wander by?
Ever to fly, with white star-faces set
Quenchless against the darkness, and the wet
Pinions of all the storms,—on, on alone,
With radiant locks outblown,
And sun-strong eyes to see
Into the sunless maze of all futurity!

Not ours the little measure of the years,
The bitter-sweet of summer that soon wanes,
The briefer benison of springtime rains;
Nay, but the thirst of all the living spheres,

Full-fed with mighty draughts of dark and light,—
The soul of all the dawns, the love of night,
The strength of deathless winters, and the boon
Of endless summer noon.
Look down, from star to star,
And see the centuries,—a flock of birds, afar.

Afar! But we, each one God's sentinel,
Lifting on high the torches that are His,
Look forth to one another o'er the abyss,
And cry, *Eternity,—and all is well!*
So ever journey we, and only know
The way is His, and unto Him we go.
Through all the voiceless desert of the air
Through all the star-dust there,
Where none has ever gone,
Still singing, seeking still, we wander on and on.

O Brother Planets, ye to whom I cry,
Yet hath a strange dream touched me; for a cloud
Flared like a moth, within mine eyes. I bowed
My head, and, looking down through all the sky,
I saw the little Earth, far down below,—
The Earth that all the wandering winds do know.
Like some ground-bird, the small, beloved one
Fluttered about the sun.
Ah, were that little star
Only a signal-light of love for us, afar!

ROSE O'NEILL (1874-)

FAUN-TAKEN

Who was it then that lately took me in the wood?
And was it I that lay twice seven nights on leaves,
With musky hair against my side!
That cruel hair that kept me kindly from the cold!

Gold, gold!
  Of yellow eyes that glance and hide!
Am I the maddened one that goes—and grieves
  For lack of laughter laughing till I died?

Oh, drouth of grapy laughter, dearth and drouth!
  Twice seven days are but a blurring ring
That circles round the corner of a mouth!
  Oh, wide, wide mouths that bellow so, or fling
That fluting up to birds like spurted wine!
  But, ah, no more, those sounds without a name—
    No more that ambiguous grace of god and ape,
    Where strange feet dance upon the dripping grape—
Those feet one must not see—that wounded mine!

Let me but once look back again and pass.
  Once only see him again—and groan and go—
The lips that laugh in the grass—
  And kiss in a way one must not know.
The lips that cling the mouths of pipes and suck
The roots of frightened flowers too pale to pluck;
  The curls that vine o'er what one must not see—
  Those horny hiders that so gorèd me!
Then, run and run—again to the hearths, the roofs!
But close behind,—the pipes, the pipes,—the hoofs!

MAHLON LEONARD FISHER
(1874-)

REALIZATION

If I should lift my look for yours to-night,
  And find your eyes were lidded listlessly,
  But with an air of calm finality,
  As if no morrow's morning might delight
The fibers of your being, nor be bright

Because you saw its coming in a dream,
And wished it every splendor (while the gleam
Of candles danced upon your forehead's white);
Or if my spirit, lost where speech is not,
Should lean to catch the word it seemed you said,
And suddenly remember you were dead,
And had been so so long the years forgot,
I think (*and I have stood where Sorrow taught!*)
The Fact could not be sadder than the Thought!

THE ANCIENT SACRIFICE

Ye dead and gone great armies of the world,
Sweet gleam the fields where ye were used to pass,
With Death for leader, legioned like the grass,
Day after day by dews of morning pearled.
Ye dead and gone great armies, ye were hurled
'Gainst other armies, great and dead and gone,
In awful dark: ye died before the dawn,
Ne'er knowing how your flags in peace are furled!
Ye are the tall fair forests that were felled
To build a pyre for strife that it might cease;
Ye are the white lambs slaughtered to bring peace;
Ye are the sweet ships sunk that storm be quelled;
And ye are lilies plucked and set like stars
About the blood-stained shrine of bygone wars!

TO NATURE

Be thou my priestess, who hast ever stood
Between me and the World! Confess him, then,
Who hath too often gone the ways of men,
And grant him absolution by thy rood
Upreared 'mid Bloom and Beauty, where they brood.
And let him have, at last, thine unction sweet;
Some share of Autumn's gauze for winding-sheet;
For candles, two wan lilies in a wood.

And chant him, without sadness, as thou hast
In summers numberless, thy litanies,
If so the soft responses be the trees',
And theirs the sole enfolding shadow cast.
And, in thy silence, read him, as before,
Thy Ritual of Stillness—nothing more!

ANNA HEMPSTEAD BRANCH
(1875-)

GRIEVE NOT, LADIES

Oh, grieve not, Ladies, if at night
Ye wake to feel your beauty going.
It was a web of frail delight,
Inconstant as an April snowing.

In other eyes, in other lands,
In deep fair pools, new beauty lingers,
But like spent water in your hands
It runs from your reluctant fingers.

Ye shall not keep the singing lark
That owes to earlier skies its duty.
Weep not to hear along the dark
The sound of your departing beauty.

The fine and anguished ear of night
Is tuned to hear the smallest sorrow.
Oh, wait until the morning light!
It may not seem so gone to-morrow!

But honey-pale and rosy-red!
Brief lights that made a little shining!
Beautiful looks about us shed—
They leave us to the old repining.

Think not the watchful dim despair
  Has come to you, the first, sweet-hearted!
For oh, the gold in Helen's hair!
  And how she cried when that departed!

Perhaps that one that took the most,
  The swiftest borrower, wildest spender,
May count, as we do not, the cost—
  And grow to us more true and tender.

Happy are we if in his eyes
  We see no shadow of forgetting,
Nay—if our star sinks in those skies
  We shall not wholly see its setting.

Then let us laugh as do the brooks
  That such immortal youth is ours,
If memory keeps for them our looks
  As fresh as are the spring-time flowers.

Oh, grieve not, ladies, if at night
  Ye wake to feel the cold December!
Rather recall the early light
  And in your loved one's arms, remember.

ERE THE GOLDEN BOWL IS BROKEN

He gathered for His own delight
  The sparkling waters of my soul.
A thousand creatures, bubbling bright—
  He set me in a golden bowl.

From the deep cisterns of the earth
  He bade me up—the shining daughter—
And I am exquisite with mirth,
  A brightening and a sunlit water.

The wild, the free, the radiant one,
A happy bubble I did glide.
I poised my sweetness to the sun
And there I sleeked my silver side.

Sometimes I lifted up my head
And globed the moonlight with my hands,
Or thin as flying wings I spread
Angelic wildness through the sands.

Then, woven into webs of light,
I breathed, I sighed, I laughed aloud,
And lifting up my pinions bright
I shone in Heaven, a bird-white cloud.

Then did I dance above the mead,
And through the crystal fields would run,
And from my scarlet splendours breed
The golden thunders of the sun.

Beneath the whitening stars I flew
And floated moon-like on the breeze,
Or my frail heart was piercèd through
With sharp sweet flowers of the trees.

Of giant crags I bear the scars,
And I have swept along the gale,
Such multitudes as are the stars,
My myriad faces rapt and pale.

As savage creatures strong and free
Make wild the jungle of the wood,
The starry powers that sport in me
Habit my silver solitude.

From out my smallness, soft as dew,
That utter fastness, stern and deep,
Terrible meanings look at you
Like vision from the eyes of sleep.

Anna Hempstead Branch

I cannot leap—I cannot run—
I only glimmer, soft and mild,
A limpid water in the sun,
A sparkling and a sunlit child.

What stranger ways shall yet be mine
When I am spilled, you cannot see.
But now you laugh to watch me shine,
And smooth the hidden stars in me.

Lightly you stroke my silver wing—
The folded carrier of my soul.
A soft, a shy, a silent thing,
A water in a golden bowl.

RIDGELY TORRENCE (1875-)

THE SINGERS IN A CLOUD

Overhead at sunset all heard the choir.
Nothing could be seen except jewelled gray
Raining beauty earthward, flooding with desire
All things that listened there in the broken day;
Songs from freer breathers, their unprisoned fire
Out of cloudy fountains, flying and hurled,
Fell and warmed the world.

Sudden came a wind and birds were laid bare,
Only music warmed them round their brown breasts.
They had sent the splendors pouring through the air,
Love was their heat and home far above their nests.
Light went softly out and left their voices there:
Starward passed forever all that great cry,
Burning, round the sky.

On the earth the battles war against light,
Heavy lies the harrow, bitter the field.
Beauty, like a river running through the night,
Streams past the stricken ones whom it would have healed,

But the darkened faces turn away from sight.
Blind, bewildered nations sow, reap and fall,
Shadows gather all.

Far above the birdsong bright shines the gold.
Through the starry orchards earth's paths are hung;
As she moves among them glowing fruits unfold,
So that the heavens there reawaken young.
Overhead is beauty, healing for the old.
Overhead is morning, nothing but youth.
Only lovely youth.

PERCY MACKAYE (1875-)

THE AUTOMOBILE

Fluid the world flowed under us: the hills
  Billow on billow of umbrageous green
  Heaved us, aghast, to fresh horizons, seen
One rapturous instant, blind with flash of rills
And silver-rising storms and dewy stills
  Of dripping boulders, till the dim ravine
  Drowned us again in leafage, whose serene
Coverts grew loud with our tumultuous wills.

Then all of Nature's old amazement seemed
  Sudden to ask us: "Is this also man?
  This plunging, volant, land-amphibian
That Plato mused and Paracelsus dreamed?
  Reply!" And piercing us with ancient scan,
The shrill, primeval hawk gazed down—and screamed.

ROBERT FROST (1875-)

OUR SINGING STRENGTH

It snowed in spring on earth so dry and warm
The flakes could find no landing place to form.

Hordes spent themselves to make it wet and cold,
And still they failed of any lasting hold.
They made no white impression on the black.
They disappeared as if earth sent them back.
Not till from separate flakes they changed at night
To almost strips and tapes of ragged white
Did grass and garden ground confess it snowed,
And all go back to winter but the road.
Next day the scene was piled and puffed and dead.
The grass lay flattened under one great tread.
Borne down until the end almost took root,
The rangey bough anticipated fruit
With snowballs cupped in every opening bud.
The road alone maintained itself in mud,
Whatever its secret was of greater heat
From inward fires or brush of passing feet.

In spring more mortal singers than belong
To any one place cover us with song.
Thrush, bluebird, blackbird, sparrow, and robin throng;
Some to go further north to Hudson's Bay,
Some that have come too far north back away,
Really a very few to build and stay.
Now was seen how these liked belated snow.
The fields had nowhere left for them to go;
They'd soon exhausted all there was in flying;
The trees they'd had enough of with once trying
And setting off their heavy powder load.
They could find nothing open but the road.
So there they let their lives be narrowed in
By thousands the bad weather made akin.
The road became a channel running flocks
Of glossy birds like ripples over rocks.
I drove them under foot in bits of flight
That kept the ground, almost disputing right
Of way with me from apathy of wing,
A talking twitter all they had to sing.

A few I must have driven to despair
Made quick asides, but having done in air
A whir among white branches great and small
As in some too much carven marble hall
Where one false wing beat would have brought down all
Came tamely back in front of me, the Drover,
To suffer the same driven nightmare over.
One such storm in a lifetime couldn't teach them
That back behind pursuit it couldn't reach them;
None flew behind me to be left alone.

Well, something for a snowstorm to have shown
The country's singing strength thus brought together,
That though repressed and moody with the weather
Was none the less there ready to be freed
And sing the wildflowers up from root and seed.

AN OLD MAN'S WINTER NIGHT

All out of doors looked darkly in at him
Through the thin frost, almost in separate stars,
That gathers on the pane in empty rooms.
What kept his eyes from giving back the gaze
Was the lamp tilted near them in his hand.
What kept him from remembering what it was
That brought him to that creaking room was age.
He stood with barrels round him—at a loss.
And having scared the cellar under him
In clomping there, he scared it once again
In clomping off;—and scared the outer night,
Which has its sounds, familiar, like the roar
Of trees and crack of branches, common things,
But nothing so like beating on a box.
A light he was to no one but himself
Where now he sat, concerned with he knew what,
A quiet light, and then not even that.
He consigned to the moon, such as she was,

So late-arising, to the broken moon
As better than the sun in any case
For such a charge, his snow upon the roof,
His icicles along the wall to keep;
And slept. The log that shifted with a jolt
Once in the stove, disturbed him and he shifted,
And eased his heavy breathing, but still slept.
One aged man—one man—can't fill a house,
A farm, a countryside, or if he can,
It's thus he does it of a winter night.

AFTER APPLE-PICKING

My long two-pointed ladder's sticking through a tree
Toward heaven still,
And there's the barrel that I didn't fill
Beside it, and there may be two or three
Apples I didn't pick upon some bough.
But I am done with apple-picking now.
Essence of winter sleep is on the night,
The scent of apples: I am drowsing off.
I cannot rub the strangeness from my sight
I got from looking through a pane of glass
I skimmed this morning from the drinking trough
And held against the world of hoary grass.
It melted, and I let it fall and break.
But I was well
Upon my way to sleep before it fell,
And I could tell
What form my dreaming was about to take.
Magnified apples appear and disappear,
Stem end and blossom end,
And every fleck of russet showing clear.
My instep arch not only keeps the ache,
It keeps the pressure of a ladder-round.
I feel the ladder sway as the boughs bend.
And I keep hearing from the cellar bin

The rumbling sound
Of load on load of apples coming in.
For I have had too much
Of apple-picking: I am overtired
Of the great harvest I myself desired.
There were ten thousand thousand fruit to touch,
Cherish in hand, lift down, and not let fall.
For all
That struck the earth,
No matter if not bruised or spiked with stubble,
Went surely to the cider-apple heap
As of no worth.
One can see what will trouble
This sleep of mine, whatever sleep it is.
Were he not gone,
The woodchuck could say whether it's like his
Long sleep, as I describe its coming on,
Or just some human sleep.

NOT TO KEEP

They sent him back to her. The letter came
Saying . . . And she could have him. And before
She could be sure there was no hidden ill
Under the formal writing, he was in her sight,
Living. They gave him back to her alive—
How else? They are not known to send the dead—
And not disfigured visibly. His face?
His hands? She had to look, to ask,
"What is it, dear?" And she had given all
And still she had all—*they* had—they the lucky!
Wasn't she glad now? Everything seemed won,
And all the rest for them permissible ease.
She had to ask, "What was it, dear?"

"Enough,
Yet not enough. A bullet through and through,
High in the breast. Nothing but what good care

And medicine and rest, and you a week,
Can cure me of to go again." The same
Grim giving to do over for them both.
She dared no more than ask him with her eyes
How was it with him for a second trial.
And with his eyes he asked her not to ask.
They had given him back to her, but not to keep.

TWO LOOK AT TWO

Love and forgetting might have carried them
A little further up the mountain side
With night so near, but not much further up.
They must have halted soon in any case
With thoughts of the path back, how rough it was
With rock and washout, and unsafe in darkness;
When they were halted by a tumbled wall
With barbed-wire binding. They stood facing this,
Spending what onward impulse they still had
In one last look the way they must not go,
On up the failing path, where, if a stone
Or earthslide moved at night, it moved itself;
No footstep moved it. "This is all," they sighed,
"Good-night to woods." But not so; there was more.
A doe from round a spruce stood looking at them
Across the wall, as near the wall as they.
She saw them in their field, they her in hers.
The difficulty of seeing what stood still,
Like some up-ended boulder split in two,
Was in her clouded eyes: they saw no fear there.
She seemed to think that two thus they were safe.
Then, as if they were something that, though strange,
She could not trouble her mind with too long,
She sighed and passed unscared along the wall.
"*This,* then, is all. What more is there to ask?"
But no, not yet. A snort to bid them wait.
A buck from round the spruce stood looking at them

Across the wall as near the wall as they.
This was an antlered buck of lusty nostril,
Not the same doe come back into her place.
He viewed them quizzically with jerks of head,
As if to ask, "Why don't you make some motion?
Or give some sign of life? Because you can't.
I doubt if you're as living as you look."
Thus till he had them almost feeling dared
To stretch a proffering hand—and a spell-breaking.
Then he too passed unscared along the wall.
Two had seen two, whichever side you spoke from.
"This *must* be all." It was all. Still they stood,
A great wave from it going over them,
As if the earth in one unlooked-for favor
Had made them certain earth returned their love.

PAUL'S WIFE

To drive Paul out of any lumber camp
All that was needed was to say to him,
"How is the wife, Paul?"—and he'd disappear.
Some said it was because he had no wife,
And hated to be twitted on the subject.
Others because he'd come within a day
Or so of having one, and then been jilted.
Others because he'd had one once, a good one,
Who'd run away with some one else and left him.
And others still because he had one now
He only had to be reminded of,—
He was all duty to her in a minute:
He had to run right off to look her up,
As if to say, "That's so, how is my wife?
I hope she isn't getting into mischief."
No one was anxious to get rid of Paul.
He'd been the hero of the mountain camps
Ever since, just to show them, he had slipped
The bark of a whole tamarack off whole,

As clean as boys do off a willow twig
To make a willow whistle on a Sunday
In April by subsiding meadow brooks.
They seemed to ask him just to see him go,
"How is the wife, Paul?" and he always went.
He never stopped to murder anyone
Who asked the question. He just disappeared—
Nobody knew in what direction,
Although it wasn't usually long
Before they heard of him in some new camp,
The same Paul at the same old feats of logging.
The question everywhere was why should Paul
Object to being asked a civil question—
A man you could say almost anything to
Short of a fighting word. You have the answers.
And there was one more not so fair to Paul:
That Paul had married a wife not his equal.
Paul was ashamed of her. To match a hero,
She would have had to be a heroine;
Instead of which she was some half-breed squaw.
But if the story Murphy told was true,
She wasn't anything to be ashamed of.

You know Paul could do wonders. Everyone's
Heard how he thrashed the horses on a load
That wouldn't budge until they simply stretched
Their rawhide harness from the load to camp.
Paul told the boss the load would be all right,
"The sun will bring your load in"—and it did—
By shrinking the rawhide to natural length.
That's what is called a stretcher. But I guess
The one about his jumping so's to land
With both his feet at once against the ceiling,
And then land safely right side up again,
Back on the floor, is fact or pretty near fact.
Well this is such a yarn. Paul sawed his wife
Out of a white-pine log. Murphy was there,

And, as you might say, saw the lady born.
Paul worked at anything in lumbering.
He'd been hard at it taking boards away
For—I forget—the last ambitious sawyer
To want to find out if he couldn't pile
The lumber on Paul till Paul begged for mercy.
They'd sliced the first slab off a big butt log,
And the sawyer had slammed the carriage back
To slam end on again against the saw teeth.
To judge them by the way they caught themselves
When they saw what had happened to the log,
They must have had a guilty expectation
Something was going to go with their slambanging.
Something had left a broad black streak of grease
On the new wood the whole length of the log
Except, perhaps, a foot at either end.
But when Paul put his finger in the grease,
It wasn't grease at all, but a long slot.
The log was hollow. They were sawing pine.
"First time I ever saw a hollow pine.
That comes of having Paul around the place.
Take it to hell for me," the sawyer said.
Everyone had to have a look at it,
And tell Paul what he ought to do about it.
(They treated it as his.) "You take a jack-knife,
And spread the opening, and you've got a dug-out
All dug to go a-fishing in." To Paul
The hollow looked too sound and clean and empty
Ever to have housed birds or beasts or bees.
There was no entrance for them to get in by.
It looked to him like some new kind of hollow
He thought he'd *better* take his jack-knife to.
So after work that evening he came back
And let enough light into it by cutting
To see if it was empty. He made out in there
A slender length of pith, or was it pith?
It might have been the skin a snake had cast

And left stood up on end inside the tree
The hundred years the tree must have been growing.
More cutting and he had this in both hands,
And, looking from it to the pond near by,
Paul wondered how it would respond to water.
Not a breeze stirred, but just the breath of air
He made in walking slowly to the beach
Blew it once off his hands and almost broke it.
He laid it at the edge where it could drink.
At the first drink it rustled and grew limp.
At the next drink it grew invisible.
Paul dragged the shallows for it with his fingers,
And thought it must have melted. It was gone.
And then beyond the open water, dim with midges,
Where the log drive lay pressed against the boom,
It slowly rose a person, rose a girl,
Her wet hair heavy on her like a helmet,
Who, leaning on a log looked back at Paul.
And that made Paul in turn look back
To see if it was anyone behind him
That she was looking at instead of him.
Murphy had been there watching all the time,
But from a shed where neither of them could see him.
There was a moment of suspense in birth
When the girl seemed too water-logged to live,
Before she caught her first breath with a gasp
And laughed. Then she climbed slowly to her feet,
And walked off talking to herself or Paul
Across the logs like backs of alligators,
Paul taking after her around the pond.

Next evening Murphy and some other fellows
Got drunk, and tracked the pair up Catamount,
From the bare top of which there is a view
To other hills across a kettle valley.
And there, well after dark, let Murphy tell it,
They saw Paul and his creature keeping house.

It was the only glimpse that anyone
Has had of Paul and her since Murphy saw them
Falling in love across the twilight mill-pond.
More than a mile across the wilderness
They sat together half-way up a cliff
In a small niche let into it, the girl
Brightly, as if a star played on the place,
Paul darkly, like her shadow. All the light
Was from the girl herself, though, not from a star,
As was apparent from what happened next.
All those great ruffians put their throats together,
And let out a loud yell, and threw a bottle,
As a brute tribute of respect to beauty.
Of course the bottle fell short by a mile,
But the shout reached the girl and put her light out.
She went out like a firefly, and that was all.

So there were witnesses that Paul was married,
And not to anyone to be ashamed of.
Everyone had been wrong in judging Paul.
Murphy told me Paul put on all those airs
About his wife to keep her to himself.
Paul was what's called a terrible possessor.
Owning a wife with him meant owning her.
She wasn't anybody else's business,
Either to praise her, or so much as name her,
And he'd thank people not to think of her.
Murphy's idea was that a man like Paul
Wouldn't be spoken to about a wife
In any way the world knew how to speak.

WILLIAM ELLERY LEONARD
(1876-)

THE CONCLUSION OF "TWO LIVES"

I

Under the trees I sat, under the blue
Midsummer morning; under the quiet trees,
Under the twilight, under the little breeze
That scarcely dipped along the hillside dew;
Day after day I sat, to hear some few
Whisperings of the Comforter, and these
My words, with hands clasping my folded knees:
"Knock, and it shall be opened unto you."
My heart, my broken heart, was ready, ready
My utmost soul (that might no longer talk),
Ready for God, still as a leaf grown steady
After the tempest on a shivered stalk:
I made God's test, in all good faith I made it;—
Is there a God?—if so, then he betrayed it.

I made the test in God's own Laboratory
(If sages speak the truth), with each appliance
Perfect in its adjustment; and my Science
Showed no results: there shone no inward glory,
There flooded me no dominant control,
No truth, no peace that passeth understanding;
Until at last, as ship that makes its landing,
I anchored on its native shore my soul,
Knowing this, this: for *me* no Comforter
From Otherwhere, for *me* salvation none,
Save such as by stern action might be won
Among things round me; I said: "It horror were
In *such* a world, were Foresight at the wheel"—
I said: " 'Ich lass den Herrgott aus dem Spiel.' "

I *could* not have beat back my way to life,
Inch after inch, with lacerated shins,
Through thorns and rocks, whilst mocked the Harlequins,
The monstrous midnight shapes of dancing Strife,
Had I still thought, "The Lord is lord of all."—
'T had been too ghastly; but I got good grip
On savior-energy of sportsmanship,
And heard far off Humanity to call
Me to its service. Thus I *would* not die.
And trained the shattered body back to speed,
And back to strength. (Run with me, if you will,
Young athletes—I'll outstrip you to the hill!)—
And trained the mind still forward to the High,
The Keen, the Firm! (And let who should, take heed!)

Ere this, had I abandoned holy house
Of Holy Church, with organ, cross, and book,—
As some dim cob-webbed hunting-lodge forsook
Not yet of bat and wasp, though of the mouse
And eager hound; and now that mystic Union
With Love Divine, as Brahma, Logos, God,—
Preached by the prophets of a World-communion—
Failed me the same, whatever path I trod,
Whatever tree I sat me by. . . . I guess
Ye grieve at such conclusion, saying: "So,
In vain he suffered all the long distress,
For vain his wisdom from his overthrow."—
Spare me (who've been with life) such platitude—
Even I have spelt new meanings for my good,

Like one who solves some curious alphabet
Upon a desert stele. . . . But perhaps
I am too near the tempests of collapse
To tongue their awful intimacies yet
For the articulate world. . . . And if *I* grow
By suffering, where is she? . . . And shall we meet
Somewhere again along the Cosmic Flow,
I and the woman of the winding-sheet?—

All proofs and guesses of ten thousand years
Never have dried one orphaned heart its tears:
I have no proof and but a shadow-guess,
And yet I've never wept. . . . But should we meet,
Would *she* still know me after my distress,
Would *I* still find the words wherewith to greet?

Like one who solves some curious alphabet
Or desert stele . . . and then solves a word . . .
Though the God's whispering I never heard,
And though my eyes were cruelly unwet
(Harshly encountering so much to do),
I know how ineradicably absurd
That Man is but a function of the Two,
Physics and Chemistry—that we can spell
By atom and motion (or by twitch and cell)
The ineffable Adventure I've been through. . . .
I know Love, Pain, and Power are spirit-things,
My Act a more than Mine or Now or Near:
One with the Will that suffers, conquers, sings,
I was the mystic Voice I could not hear.

II

That once the gentle mind of my dead wife
Did love that fiery Roman (dead like her)—
Lucretius and his vast hexameter—
I number with the ironies of life.
That I, who turned his Latian verse to mine
For her, the while she typed each page for me,
Should, in my English, just have reached that line
Fourth from the end of the Book of Death (Book Three),
When Death rode out for her—was that design?—
If so, of God or Devil?—the line which saith,
"*O Mors æterna*—O eternal Death"—
The last, last letters she fingered key by key! . . .
But when, long after, I had wrought the rest,
I said these verses, walking down the west:

III

Indian Summer

(O Earth-and-Autumn of the Setting Sun,
She is not by, to know my task is done!)

In the brown grasses slanting with the wind,
Lone as a lad whose dog's no longer near,
Lone as a mother whose only child has sinned,
Lone on the loved hill . . . and below me here
The thistle-down in tremulous atmosphere
Along red clusters of the sumach streams;
The shriveled stalks of goldenrod are sere,
And crisp and white their flashing old racemes.
(. . . forever . . . forever . . . forever . . .)
This is the lonely season of the year,
This is the season of our lonely dreams.

(O Earth-and-Autumn of the Setting Sun,
She is not by, to know my task is done!)

The corn-shocks westward on the stubble plain
Show like an Indian village of dead days;
The long smoke trails behind the crawling train,
And floats atop the distant woods ablaze
With orange, crimson, purple. The low haze
Dims the scarped bluffs above the inland sea,
Whose wide and slaty waters in cold glaze
Await yon full-moon of the night-to-be.
(. . . far . . . and far . . . and far . . .)
These are the solemn horizons of man's ways,
These the horizons of solemn thought to me.

(O Earth-and-Autumn of the Setting Sun,
She is not by, to know my task is done!)

And this the hill she visited, as friend;
And this the hill she lingered on, as bride—
Down in the yellow valley is the end:
They laid her . . . in no evening Autumn tide. . . .
Under fresh flowers of that May morn, beside
The queens and cave-women of ancient earth. . . .

This is the hill . . . and over my city's towers,
Across the world from sunset, yonder in air,
Shines, through its scaffoldings, a civic dome
Of pilèd masonry, which shall be ours
To give, completed, to our children there. . . .
And yonder far roof of my abandoned home
Shall house new laughter. . . . Yet I tried. . . . I tried. . . .
And, ever wistful of the doom to come,
I built her man a fire for love . . . for mirth. . . .
(When snows were falling on our oaks outside,
Dear, many a winter fire upon the hearth) . . .
(. . . farewell . . . farewell . . . farewell . . .)
We dare not think too long on those who died,
While still so many yet must come to birth.

SARAH N. CLEGHORN (1876-)

COMRADE JESUS

Thanks to Saint Matthew, who had been
At mass-meetings in Palestine,
We know whose side was spoken for
When Comrade Jesus had the floor.

"Where sore they toil and hard they lie,
Among the great unwashed, dwell I.—
The tramp, the convict, I am he;
Cold-shoulder him, cold-shoulder me."

By Dives' door, with thoughtful eye,
He did to-morrow prophesy:—
"The Kingdom's gate is low and small;
The rich can scarce wedge through at all."

"A dangerous man," said Caiaphas,
"An ignorant demagogue, alas!
Friend of low women, it is he
Slanders the upright Pharisee."

For law and order, it was plain,
For Holy Church, he must be slain.
The troops were there to awe the crowd:
Mob-violence was not allowed.

Their clumsy force with force to foil
His strong, clean hands he would not soil.
He saw their childishness quite plain
Between the lightnings of his pain.

Between the twilights of his end,
He made his fellow-felon friend:
With swollen tongue and blinded eyes,
Invited him to Paradise.

Ah, let no Local him refuse!
Comrade Jesus hath paid his dues.
Whatever other be debarred,
Comrade Jesus hath his red card.

ARTHUR UPSON (1877-1908)

THE INCURABLES

Long up and down I paced the House of Pain:
On their white thrones reclined the dwellers there
In regal reticence and superb despair,

Maimed, marred, half blotted out, as they had lain,
For expiation, under the disdain
Of Life's great, grinding car; repulsive, fair,
Old, young, loud, gentle, now alike did bear
That kingly quiet whereto those attain
Whom Life has conquered, and whom Death has smitten
With the universal Light. Their erstwhile fret
Forgotten entire beneath the eternal sun,
They lay and read in air the old laws written
Of silence, and their souls were outward set
Where young and old and fair and foul are one.

GRACE HAZARD CONKLING
(1878-)

AFTER SUNSET

I have an understanding with the hills
At evening when the slanted radiance fills
Their hollows, and the great winds let them be,
And they are quiet and look down at me.
Oh, then I see the patience in their eyes
Out of the centuries that made them wise.
They lend me hoarded memory and I learn
Their thoughts of granite and their whims of fern,
And why a dream of forests must endure
Though every tree be slain; and how the pure
Invisible beauty has a word so brief,
A flower can say it or a shaken leaf,
But few may ever snare it in a song,
Though for the quest a life is not too long.
When the blue hills grow tender, when they pull
The twilight close with gesture beautiful,
And shadows are their garments, and the air
Deepens, and the wild veery is at prayer,
Their arms are strong around me: and I know
That somehow I shall follow when you go

To the still land beyond the evening star,
Where everlasting hills and valleys are,
And silence may not hurt us any more,
And terror shall be past, and grief, and war.

ADELAIDE CRAPSEY (1878-1914)

NOVEMBER NIGHT

Listen . . .
With faint dry sound,
Like steps of passing ghosts,
The leaves, frost-crisp'd, break from the trees
And fall.

MOON SHADOWS

Still as
On windless nights
The moon-cast shadows are,
So still will be my heart when I
Am dead.

SUSANNA AND THE ELDERS

"Why do
You thus devise
Evil against her?" "For that
She is beautiful, delicate;
Therefore."

THE GUARDED WOUND

If it
Were lighter touch
Than petal of flower resting
On grass, oh still too heavy it were,
Too heavy!

Adelaide Crapsey

AMAZE

I know
Not these my hands
And yet I think there was
A woman like me once had hands
Like these.

THE WARNING

Just now,
Out of the strange
Still dusk . . . as strange, as still . . .
A white moth flew . . . Why am I grown
So cold?

SONG

I make my shroud, but no one knows—
So shimmering fine it is and fair,
With stitches set in even rows.
I make my shroud, but no one knows.

In door-way where the lilac blows,
Humming a little wandering air,
I make my shroud and no one knows,
So shimmering fine it is and fair.

VACHEL LINDSAY (1879-)

JOHN BROWN

(To be sung by a leader and chorus, the leader singing the body of the poem while the chorus interrupts with the question.)

I've been to Palestine.
What did you see in Palestine?
I saw the Ark of Noah—
It was made of pitch and pine;

I saw old Father Noah
Asleep beneath his vine;
I saw Shem, Ham and Japhet
Standing in a line;
I saw the tower of Babel
In a gorgeous sunrise shine—
By a weeping-willow tree
Beside the Dead Sea.

I've been to Palestine.
What did you see in Palestine?
I saw abominations
And Gadarene swine;
I saw the sinful Canaanites
Upon the shewbread dine,
And spoil the temple vessels
And drink the temple wine;
I saw Lot's wife, a pillar of salt
Standing in the brine—
By a weeping-willow tree
Beside the Dead Sea.

I've been to Palestine.
What did you see in Palestine?
Cedars on Mount Lebanon,
Gold in Ophir's mine,
And a wicked generation
Seeking for a sign;
And Baal's howling worshippers
Their god with leaves entwine.
And . . .
I SAW THE WAR-HORSE RAMPING
AND SHAKE HIS FORELOCK FINE—
By a weeping-willow tree
Beside the Dead Sea.

I've been to Palestine.
What did you see in Palestine?

Old John Brown,
Old John Brown.
I saw his gracious wife
Dressed in a homespun gown.
I saw his seven sons
Before his feet bow down.
And he marched with his seven sons,
His wagons and goods and guns,
To his campfire by the sea,
By the waves of Galilee.

I've been to Palestine.
What did you see in Palestine?
I saw the harp and psaltery
Played for Old John Brown.
I heard the Ram's horn blow,
Blow for Old John Brown.
I saw the Bulls of Bashan—
They cheered for Old John Brown.
I saw the big Behemoth—
He cheered for Old John Brown.
I saw the big Leviathan,
He cheered for Old John Brown.
I saw the Angel Gabriel
Great power to him assign.
I saw him fight the Canaanites
And set God's Israel free.
I saw him when the war was done
In his rustic chair recline—
By his camp-fire by the sea,
By the waves of Galilee.

I've been to Palestine.
What did you see in Palestine?
Old John Brown,
Old John Brown.
And there he sits
To judge the world.

His hunting-dogs
At his feet are curled.
His eyes half-closed,
But John Brown sees
The ends of the earth,
The Day of Doom.
AND HIS SHOT-GUN LIES
ACROSS HIS KNEES—
Old John Brown,
Old John Brown.

ALADDIN AND THE JINN

"Bring me soft song," said Aladdin;
"This tailor-shop sings not at all.
Chant me a word of the twilight
Of roses that mourn in the fall.
Bring me a song like hashish
That will comfort the stale and the sad,
For I would be mending my spirit,
Forgetting these days that are bad:
Forgetting companions too shallow,
Their quarrels and arguments thin;
Forgetting the shouting muezzin."
"*I am your slave,*" said the Jinn.

"Bring me old wines," said Aladdin,
"I have been a starved pauper too long.
Serve them in vessels of jade and of shell,
Serve them with fruit and with song.
Wines of pre-Adamite Sultans
Digged from beneath the black seas,
New-gathered dew from the heavens
Dripped down from heaven's sweet trees,
Cups from the angels' pale tables
That will make me both handsome and wise;
For I have beheld her, the Princess—

Firelight and starlight her eyes!
Pauper I am—I would woo her.
And . . . let me drink wine to begin,
Though the Koran expressly forbids it."
"I am your slave," said the Jinn.

"Plan me a dome," said Aladdin,
"That is drawn like the dawn of the moon,
When the sphere seems to rest on the mountains
Half-hidden, yet full-risen soon.
Build me a dome," said Aladdin,
"That shall cause all young lovers to sigh—
The fulness of life and of beauty,
Peace beyond peace to the eye;
A palace of foam and of opal,
Pure moonlight without and within,
Where I may enthrone my sweet lady."
"I am your slave," said the Jinn.

THE GHOSTS OF THE BUFFALOES

Last night at black midnight I woke with a cry,
The windows were shaking, there was thunder on high,
The floor was a-tremble, the door was a-jar,
White fires, crimson fires, shone from afar.
I rushed to the dooryard. The city was gone.
My home was a hut without orchard or lawn.
It was mud-smear and logs near a whispering stream,
Nothing else built by man could I see in my dream . . .

Then . . .
Ghost-kings came headlong, row upon row,
Gods of the Indians, torches aglow.
They mounted the bear and the elk and the deer,
And eagles gigantic, agèd and sere,
They rode long-horn cattle, they cried "A-la-la."
They lifted the knife, the bow and the spear,
They lifted ghost-torches from dead fires below,

The midnight made grand with the cry "A-la-la."
The midnight made grand with a red-god charge,
A red-god show,
A red-god show,
"A-la-la, a-la-la, a-la-la, a-la-la."

With bodies like bronze, and terrible eyes
Came the rank and the file, with catamount cries,
Gibbering, yipping, with hollow-skull clacks,
Riding white bronchos with skeleton backs,
Scalp-hunters, beaded and spangled and bad,
Naked and lustful and foaming and mad,
Flashing primeval demoniac scorn,
Blood-thirst and pomp amid darkness reborn,
Power and glory that sleep in the grass
While the winds and the snows and the great rains pass.
They crossed the gray river, thousands abreast,
They rode out in infinite lines to the west,
Tide upon tide of strange fury and foam,
Spirits and wraiths, the blue was their home,
The sky was their goal where the star-flags are furled,
And on past those far golden splendors they whirled.
They burned to dim meteors, lost in the deep,
And I turned in dazed wonder, thinking of sleep.

And the wind crept by
Alone, unkempt, unsatisfied,
The wind cried and cried—
Muttered of massacres long past,
Buffaloes in shambles vast . . .
An owl said: "Hark, what is a-wing?"
I heard a cricket carolling,
I heard a cricket carolling,
I heard a cricket carolling.

Then . . .
Snuffing the lightning that crashed from on high
Rose royal old buffaloes, row upon row.

The lords of the prairie came galloping by.
And I cried in my heart "A-la-la, a-la-la.
A red-god show,
A red-god show,
A-la-la, a-la-la, a-la-la."

Buffaloes, buffaloes, thousands abreast,
A scourge and amazement, they swept to the west.
With black bobbing noses, with red rolling tongues,
Coughing forth steam from their leather-wrapped lungs,
Cows with their calves, bulls big and vain,
Goring the laggards, shaking the mane,
Stamping flint feet, flashing moon eyes,
Pompous and owlish, shaggy and wise.
Like sea-cliffs and caves resounded their ranks
With shoulders like waves, and undulant flanks.
Tide upon tide of strange fury and foam,
Spirits and wraiths, the blue was their home,
The sky was their goal where the star-flags are furled,
And on past those far golden splendors they whirled.
They burned to dim meteors, lost in the deep,
And I turned in dazed wonder, thinking of sleep.

I heard a cricket's cymbals play,
A scarecrow lightly flapped his rags,
And a pan that hung by his shoulder rang,
Rattled and thumped in a listless way,
And now the wind in the chimney sang,
The wind in the chimney,
The wind in the chimney,
The wind in the chimney,
Seemed to say:—
"Dream, boy, dream,
If you anywise can.
To dream is the work
Of beast or man.
Life is the west-going dream-storm's breath,
Life is a dream, the sigh of the skies,

The breath of the stars, that nod on their pillows
With their golden hair mussed over their eyes."
The locust played on his musical wing,
Sang to his mate of love's delight.
I heard the whippoorwill's soft fret.
I heard a cricket carolling,
I heard a cricket carolling,
I heard a cricket say: "Good-night, good-night,
Good-night, good-night, . . . good-night."

A NEGRO SERMON: SIMON LEGREE

Legree's big house was white and green.
His cotton-fields were the best to be seen.
He had strong horses and opulent cattle,
And bloodhounds bold, with chains that would rattle.
His garret was full of curious things:
Books of magic, bags of gold,
And rabbits' feet on long twine strings,
But he went down to the Devil.

Legree, he sported a brass-buttoned coat,
A snake-skin necktie, a blood-red shirt.
Legree, he had a beard like a goat,
And a thick hairy neck, and eyes like dirt.
His puffed-out cheeks were fish-belly white,
He had great long teeth, and an appetite.
He ate raw meat, 'most every meal,
And rolled his eyes till the cat would squeal.
His fist was an enormous size
To mash poor niggers that told him lies:
He was surely a witch-man in disguise.
But he went down to the Devil.

He wore hip-boots, and would wade all day
To capture his slaves that had fled away.
But he went down to the Devil.

He beat poor Uncle Tom to death
Who prayed for Legree with his last breath.
Then Uncle Tom to Eva flew,
To the high sanctoriums bright and new;
And Simon Legree stared up beneath,
And cracked his heels, and ground his teeth:
And went down to the Devil.
He crossed the yard in the storm and gloom;
He went into his grand front room.
He said, "I killed him, and I don't care."
He kicked a hound, he gave a swear;
He tightened his belt, he took a lamp,
Went down cellar to the webs and damp.
There in the middle of the mouldy floor
He heaved up a slab; he found a door—
And went down to the Devil.

His lamp blew out, but his eyes burned bright.
Simon Legree stepped down all night—
Down, down to the Devil.
Simon Legree he reached the place,
He saw one half of the human race,
He saw the Devil on a wide green throne,
Gnawing the meat from a big ham-bone,
And he said to Mister Devil:
"I see that you have much to eat—
A red ham-bone is surely sweet.
I see that you have lion's feet;
I see your frame is fat and fine,
I see you drink your poison wine—
Blood and burning turpentine."

And the Devil said to Simon Legree:
"I like your style, so wicked and free.
Come sit and share my throne with me,
And let us bark and revel."
And there they sit and gnash their teeth,
And each one wears a hop-vine wreath.

They are matching pennies and shooting craps,
They are playing poker and taking naps.
And old Legree is fat and fine:
He heats the fire, he drinks the wine—
Blood and burning turpentine—
Down, down with the Devil;
Down, down with the Devil;
Down, down with the Devil.

JOHN G. NEIHARDT (1881-)

EASTER, 1923

Once more the Ancient Wonder
Brings back the goose and crane,
Prophetic Sons of Thunder,
Apostles of the Rain.

In many a battling river
The broken gorges boom.
Behold, the Mighty Giver
Emerges from the tomb!

Now robins chant the story
Of how the wintry sward
Is litten with the glory
Of the Angel of the Lord.

His countenance is lightning,
And still his robe is snow,
As when the dawn was brightening
Two thousand years ago.

O who can be a stranger
To what has come to pass?
The Pity of the Manger
Is mighty in the grass!

John G. Neihardt

Undaunted by Decembers,
The sap is faithful yet.
The giving Earth remembers
And only men forget!

WITTER BYNNER (1881-)

A MASQUE OF LIFE AND DEATH

A hooded figure followed me,
Striking a terror in my breast;
Headlong I fled from him—
No good was in his quest.

A golden figure ran from me
On naked feet that left no trace;
Headlong I followed her
But could not see her face—

Until she turned and, while I stared
As at the coming of great ships,
The hooded figure seized his time
And kissed me with her lips.

DURING A CHORALE BY CÉSAR FRANCK

In an old chamber softly lit
We heard the Chorale played.
And where you sat, an exquisite
Image of life and lover of it,
Death came to serenade.

I know now, Celia, what you heard
And why you turned and smiled.
It was the white wings of a bird
Offering flight—and you were stirred
Like an adventurous child.

Death sang: "There is no cause for fear,
  Uplift your countenance!"
And bade me be your cavalier,
Called me to march and shed no tear,
  Said, "Sing to her and dance!"

And so you followed, lured and led
  By those mysterious wings.
And when I knew that you were dead,
I wept . . . But now I sing instead,
  As a true lover sings.

I sing of you—"O, take her deep,
  And cherish and proclaim
A more restoring calm than sleep,
And bring the charge to all who weep
  To glorify her name!"

And when I sing of you, you hear
  My heart, my praise, my prayer,
Which formerly were never clear
As now they are, for you are near
  Forever everywhere.

HERMANN HAGEDORN (1882-)

DOORS

Like a young child who to his mother's door
  Runs eager for the welcoming embrace,
  And finds the door shut, and with troubled face
Calls and through sobbing calls, and o'er and o'er
Calling, storms at the panel—so before
  A door that will not open, sick and numb,
  I listen for a word that will not come,
And know, at last, I may not enter more.

Silence! And through the silence and the dark
By that closed door, the distant sob of tears
Beats on my spirit, as on fairy shores
The spectral sea; and through the sobbing, hark!
Down the fair-chambered corridor of years,
The quiet shutting, one by one, of doors.

THOMAS S. JONES, JR. (1882-)

AKHNATON

When golden ritual and scarlet rite
Of Amon shook all Asia by its sound,
He watched the sun rise over Thebes and found
The Lord of Love whose footprints star the night;
And while the conquering Pharaohs in their might
Within time's drear necropolis lie bound,
He dawns upon the world's horizon crowned
Like living Aton, beautiful with light.

For long before the mountain thunder spoke
To Israel's shepherd, or on Galilee
The fishermen unfurled their gleaming sail,
Soaring against the dark his clear song broke,—
"With Thy sweet Voice throughout eternity
Call on my name and it shall never fail."

ZARATHUSTRA

Outlined in fire against primeval night
He stood among the Magi, first to name
The unknown Source from which all Being came,
And made the mind sole image of Its might;
Death, cold, and darkness strove to dim his sight
With powers demonic hidden in man's frame,
But from his hand upsoared the singing flame
And summoned down the blazing Sons of Light.

The mists of time hide creed and elder god,
But not the Mage whose purity raised men
And drew archangels to his lone desire:
Iran's grave prophet with his burning rod
Kindles the heart's high altar now as then,
And from the stars still falls the answering fire.

GAUTAMA

Of highway dust the Buddha made his throne
And spoke of love with breath like meadow balm,—
A beggar's bowl lay on his lifted palm,
But white as stars those hands of healing shone:
And pierced with pity Gautama made known
The light that liberates, the awful calm
About the region of the waiting Brahm,
Whose name is Peace, the Lonely and Alone.

And as he spoke, the common roadway spread
Among the worlds of time and space which bind
The starry soul that wanders fugitive;
And men upon a path of gold were led
Past hells and heavens, birth and death, to find
Love's very Heart wherein all Loves shall live.

LAO-TSE

Lao-Tse listened while Confucius weighed
Grave ceremonials of a mandarin
Borne long ago in lacquered palanquin
To lutes of lapis lazuli and jade,
And answered slowly from a great tree's shade,
"Immense and lonely Tao broods within:
Its peace the weak and pure of heart may win,
Not yellow kings in royal cavalcade."

And turning baffled from the dreamer's lore
That seemed to lead him toward oblivion,
Confucius passed along the windless wood;
Then looking back, beheld the sage once more
Stand smiling in the pathway of the sun,
Silent with peace he had not understood.

PYTHAGORAS

Fair as the seven daughters of the sun,
Mysterious as the moon's white hemisphere
He saw the soul, that fiery charioteer
Whose roads beyond their golden courses run;
And when past gates of birth and death it spun,
Where battlemented stars lift spear on spear,
He felt the God's bright shadow drawing near—
The Lover and Belovèd merge in One.

For he who listened while great rhythms rolled,
Who numbered nameless atoms for the key
Of that vast Cause which forms, dissolves, unites,
Had found the image that his heart would hold,
Not in the changing earth, the air or sea,
But throned in Self, the changeless Light of Lights.

EMPEDOCLES

Contemptuous of kings, Empedocles
Rode robed in purple, bidding men to dare
Godlike dominion over earth and air,
To learn the laws that shaped the Pleiades;
Then turned to fight the last lord's grim decrees,
His red funereal torch a mountain's glare
Against black skies, where silver fires aflare
Moved motionless in immemorial frieze.

Upon the livid summit, laurel-crowned
He paused, then plunged deep under fiery deep
Where Being and Becoming are one Breath;
And, though the crimson crater hemmed him round,
None watched from out its core a live flame leap,
Older than night, the silent stars, or death.

JOHN MYERS O'HARA (1886-)

ATROPOS

Atropos, dread
One of the Three,
Holding the thread
Woven for me;

Grimly thy shears,
Steely and bright,
Menace the years
Left for delight.

Grant it may chance,
Just as they close,
June may entrance
Earth with the rose;

Reigning as though,
Bliss to the breath,
Endless and no
Whisper of death.

ARTHUR DAVISON FICKE (1883-)

FROM "SONNETS OF A PORTRAIT PAINTER"

I

I have seen beauty where light stabs the hills
Gold-shafted through a cloud of rosy stain.
I have known splendor where the summer spills
Its tropic wildness of torrential rain.
I have felt all the free young dominance
Of winds that walk the mountains in delight
To tear the tree-trunks from their rooted stance
And make the gorges thunderous of their might.
The light, the torrents, and the winds, in you
I thought I had perceived to kinship grown.
It was a dream. Until this hour, I knew
Nothing—nay, nothing all my days have known
Where storm and cloud and sunlight held such part
As when you came, and swept me to your heart.

II

Last night I kissed you with a brutal might
Whereof clanged echoes hunt me from my rest.
And bitter on my lips that fierce delight
Lingers, and bitter the pressure of your breast.
I am shaken, still, by the tumult of that hour
Before the dawn, when in some traitor-mood
You, upon whom love's beauty kept no power,
Lay vanquished by love's sensual habitude.
And ere the cock-crow you denied us thrice,
Being sure that all our daring dreams had lied.
Like an arc of fire then leaped my sacrifice,
My kiss of hate on the lips that had denied,—
A gift of the flesh, since the soul you dared not meet. . . .
And I longed that my kiss should strike you dead at my feet.

III

So you go back,—because they bid you come
And stand with them to prove the tales untrue,—
Until at last the whispers shall grow dumb,
And men forget the thing they guessed or knew.
And as the folly of an hour, at most,
Our love shall be remembered down the years—
A brightness dust-obscured, a vision lost,
Shall be the secret of our passionate tears.
To them—I seem a rogue who half-succeeded,
And you, frail beauty almost led astray.
All the fierce splendor that our spirits needed
Already fades, a ghost of yesterday.
Well then, go back! To your dead gods be true.
What can you say to me, or I to you?

IV

Across the shaken bastions of the year
March drives his windy chariot-wheels of cold.
Somewhere, they tell me, Spring is waiting near . . .
But all my heart is with things grey and old:—
Reliques of other Aprils, that are blown
Recklessly up and down the barren earth;
Mine the dull grasses by the Winter mown,
And the chill echoes of forgotten mirth.
Spring comes, but not for me. I know the sign
And feel it alien. I am of an age
That passes. All the blossoms that were mine
Lie trampled now beneath December's rage.
Ye children of the Spring, may life be sweet!
For me, the world crumbles beneath my feet.

V

Out of the dusk into whose gloom you went,
Answer me, tell me, why you chose to go?
Why did you seek that far-strewn firmament?
Was loneliness not keen enough below?

Did some old wrong affright you? Some new ill?
Did one more bloom that lured you turn to dust?
What spur could goad that lovely weary will,
What hopeless calm, what storm of shaken trust?
Across the giant waste of this unknown
Must I forever send my questionings?
Had you no word to leave me for my own
Before you went? Must my imaginings
Deem you forgot?— Or did your heart foretell
That time's whole later hush would speak farewell?

MAX EASTMAN (1883-)

AT THE AQUARIUM

Serene the silver fishes glide,
Stern-lipped, and pale, and wonder-eyed!
As, through the aged deeps of ocean,
They glide with wan and wavy motion.
They have no pathway where they go,
They flow like water to and fro,
They watch with never-winking eyes,
They watch with staring, cold surprise,
The level people in the air,
The people peering, peering there:
Who wander also to and fro,
And know not why or where they go,
Yet have a wonder in their eyes,
Sometimes a pale and cold surprise.

HARRY KEMP (1883-)

THE CONQUERORS

I saw the Conquerors riding by
With trampling feet of horse and men:
Empire on empire like the tide
Flooded the world and ebbed again;

A thousand banners caught the sun,
And cities smoked along the plain,
And laden down with silk and gold
And heaped-up pillage groaned the wain.

I saw the Conquerors riding by,
Splashing through loathsome floods of war—
The Crescent leaning o'er its hosts,
And the barbaric scimitar,—

And continents of moving spears,
And storms of arrows in the sky,
And all the instruments sought out
By cunning men that men may die!

I saw the Conquerors riding by
With cruel lips and faces wan:
Musing on kingdoms sacked and burned
There rode the Mongol Genghis Khan;

And Alexander, like a god,
Who sought to weld the world in one;
And Cæsar with his laurel wreath;
And like a thing from Hell the Hun;

And leading, like a star the van,
Heedless of upstretched arm and groan,
Inscrutable Napoleon went
Dreaming of empire, and alone . . .

Then all they perished from the earth
As fleeting shadows from a glass,
And, conquering down the centuries,
Came Christ, the Swordless, on an ass!

GEORGE SYLVESTER VIERECK
(1884-)

THE HAUNTED HOUSE

I lay beside you . . . on your lips the while
Hovered, most strange . . . the mirage of a smile,
Such as a minstrel lover might have seen
Upon the visage of some antique queen,
Flickering like flame, half choked by wind and dust,
Weary of all things saving song and lust.

How many days and years and lovers' lies
Gave you your knowedge? You are very wise
And tired, yet insatiate to the last.
These things I thought, but said not; and there passed
Before my vision in voluptuous quest,
The pageant of the lovers who possessed
Your soul and body even as I possess,
Who marked your passion in its nakedness
And all your love-sins when your love was new.

They saw as I your quivering breast, and drew
Nearer to the consuming flame that burns
Deep to the marrow of my bone, and turns
My heart to love even as theirs who knew
From head to girdle each sweet curve of you,
Each little way of loving. No caress
But apes the part of former loves. Ah yes,
Even thus your hand toyed in the hair of him
Who came before me. Was he fair of limb
Or very dark? What matter, with such lures
You snared the heart of all your paramours.

To-night I feel the presence of the others,
Your lovers were they and are now my brothers
And I have nothing that has not been theirs,
No single bloom the tree of passion bears

They have not plucked. Beloved, can it be?
Is there no gift that you reserve for me—
No loving kindness or no subtle sin,
No secret shrine that none has entered in,
Whither no mocking memories pursue
Love's wistful pilgrim? I am weary too,
With weariness of all your lovers, and when
I follow in the ways of other men,
I know each spot of your sweet body is
A cross, the tombstone of some perished kiss.

My arms embrace you, and a silent host
Of shadows rises—at each side a ghost!
With all its beauty and its faultless grace
Your body, dearest, is a haunted place.
When I did yield to passion's swift demand,
One of your lovers touched me with his hand.
And in the pang of amorous delight
I hear strange voices calling through the night.

DONALD EVANS (1884-1921)

EN MONOCLE

Born with a monocle he stares at life,
And sends his soul on pensive promenades;
He pays a high price for discarded gods,
And then regilds them to renew their strife.
His calm moustache points to the ironies,
And a fawn-coloured laugh sucks in the night,
Full of the riant mists that turn to white
In brief lost battles with banalities.

Masters are makeshifts and a path to tread
For blue pumps that are ardent for the air;
Features are fixtures when the face is fled,

And we are left the husks of tarnished hair;
But he is one who lusts uncomforted
To kiss the naked phrase quite unaware.

BODY OF THE QUEEN

Suave body of the Queen, she gave me you,
Misting in still, warm rains of tenderness—
But kept herself, and we are each betrayed.
You are her mistress, and she makes of me
Another mistress! Playthings are we both,
When we thought she meant us for full sovereignty;
It was not regal, and her throne is stained.
She bade you seek me, and your singing feet
Ran quickly, surely; you held out your hands.
You had no fear because you felt my heart
Leap as you laid your white breast under it.
We had no prides to conquer as we kissed,
For we knew kinship in our overthrow.
Yet now she stands apart and questions us.
How can she question—leave me out of it—
But you, her body, her sweet source of joy,—
How can she then divide herself from you,
And calmly reckon what the gain may be?
The hour will come when she will tire of us,
And all your softness will be broken up,
Your rioting lips chilled with an ashen wind.
There is a hint of vileness in the air,
And on the strings a dance of ironies,
With love's scarecrow jigging wearily . . .
Still I have you—so I am not afraid!

DINNER AT THE HOTEL DE LA TIGRESSE VERTE

As they sat sipping their glasses in the courtyard
Of the Hotel de la Tigresse Verte,
With their silk-swathed ankles softly kissing,

They were certain that they had forever
Imprisoned fickleness in the vodka—
They knew they had found the ultimate pulse of love.

Story upon story, the dark windows whispered down
To them from above, and over the roof's edge
Danced a grey moon.

The woman pressed her chicken-fan against her breast
And through her ran trepidant mutinies of desire
With treacheries of emotion. Her voice vapoured:
"In which room shall it be to-night, darling?"
His eyes swept the broad façade, the windows,
Tier upon tier, and his lips were regnant:
"In every room, my beloved!"

BONFIRE OF KINGS

Kingship is passing down the yellow road,
  And crowns are dangling from the willow tree;
Royalty flees to seek a last abode
  With the other outcasts of eternity.

The palaces are burning, for bad kings
  Have brought the breaking of the whitest dream
That man has ever dreamt—imaginings
  That bathed the throne with a diviner gleam.

The mob is jigging to a ribald air
  That mocks the dying pulse of sovereignty;
Humanity is singing everywhere
  All men are equal. Dupes of democracy!

EUNICE TIETJENS (1884-)

THE DRUG CLERK

The drug clerk stands behind the counter
Young and dapper and debonair. . . .

Before him burn the great unwinking lights,
The hectic stars of city nights,
Red as hell's pit, green as a mermaid's hair.
A queer half-acrid smell is in the air.
Behind him on the shelves in ordered rows
With strange, abbreviated names
Dwell half the facts of life. That young man knows
Bottled and boxed and powdered here,
Dumb tragedies, deceptions, secret shames,
And comedy and fear.

Sleep slumbers here, like a great quiet sea
Shrunk to this bottle's compass; sleep that brings
Sweet respite from the teeth of pain
To those poor tossing things
That the white nurses watch so thoughtfully.
And here again
Dwell the shy souls of Maytime flowers
That shall make sweeter still those poignant hours
When wide-eyed youth looks on the face of love.
And, for those others who have found too late
The bitter fruits thereof,
Here are cosmetics, powders, paints,—the arts
That hunted women use to hunt again
With scented flesh for bait.
And here is comfort for the hearts
Of sucking babes in their first teething pain.
Here dwells the substance of huge fervid dreams,
Fantastic, many-colored, shot with gleams
Of ecstasy and madness, that shall come
To some pale, twitching sleeper in a bunk.
And here is courage, cheaply bought
To cure a blue sick funk,
And dearly paid for in the final sum.
Here in this powdered fly is caught
Desire more ravishing than Tarquin's rape
And bloody-handed murder. And at last

When the one weary hope is past
Here is the sole escape,
The whole postern in the house of breath
Where pallid fugitives keep tryst with death.

All this the drug clerk knows and there he stands,
Young and dapper and debonair. . . .
He rests a pair of slender hands,
Much manicured, upon the counter there
And speaks: "No, we don't carry no pomade,
We only cater to the high-class trade."

SARA TEASDALE (1884-

"SINCE THERE IS NO ESCAPE"

Since there is no escape, since at the end
  My body will be utterly destroyed,
This hand I love as I have loved a friend,
  This body I tended, wept with and enjoyed;
Since there is no escape even for me
  Who love life with a love too sharp to bear:
The scent of orchards in the rain, the sea
  And hours alone too still and sure for prayer—
Since darkness waits for me, then all the more
Let me go down as waves sweep to the shore
  In pride, and let me sing with my last breath;
In these few hours of light I lift my head;
Life is my lover—I shall leave the dead
  If there is any way to baffle death.

MARGARET WIDDEMER

A CYPRIAN WOMAN

Under dusky laurel leaf,
  Scarlet leaf of rose,
I lie prone, who have known
  All a woman knows.

Love and grief and motherhood,
  Fame and mirth and scorn—
These are all shall befall
  Any woman born.

Jewel-laden are my hands,
  Tall my stone above—
Do not weep that I sleep,
  Who was wise in love.

Where I walk, a shadow gray,
  Through gray asphodel,
I am glad, who have had
  All that life can tell.

GLADYS CROMWELL (1885-1919)

THE MOULD

No doubt this active will,
So bravely steeped in sun,
This will has vanquished Death
And foiled oblivion.

But this indifferent clay,
This fine experienced hand,
So quiet, and these thoughts
That all unfinished stand,

Feel death as though it were
A shadowy caress;
And win and wear a frail
Archaic wistfulness.

RENEWAL

Can this be love men yield me in return
For what I do? I hold a strange belief
That love is not a tribute, nor a leaf
Of laurel, nor a wage the soul can earn
By any kind of doing. The concern
Of love is need, and love is the spare sheaf
We glean from pain—the fruit of patient grief.
Can this be love men yield me? Nay. I spurn
Their recompense who could so long refrain
From giving. I myself will grant the gift
And prove what loving is. I'll finer sift
My sorrow, make new songs distilled from pain;
Above this hour of bitterness I'll lift
My spirit up and taste my grief again!

HAZEL HALL (1886-1924)

FLIGHT

A bird may curve across the sky—
A feather of dusk, a streak of song;
And save a space and a bird to fly
There may be nothing all day long.

Flying through a cloud-made place
A bird may tangle east and west,
Maddened with going, crushing space
With the arrow of its breast.

Though never wind nor motion bring
It back again from indefinite lands,
The thin blue shadow of its wing
May cross and cross above your hands.

TWILIGHT

Tiptoeing twilight,
Before you pass,
Bathe light my spirit
As dew bathes grass.

Quiet the longing
Of my hands that yearn,
As you fold the flower
And hush the fern.

Guard me with shadows
To fortify
My failing purpose,
My tired eye,

That in your stillness
I may relight
My faith's frail candle
Before the night.

MARJORIE ALLEN SEIFFERT

THE OLD WOMAN

(A Morality Play in Two Parts)

I

Doctor There is an old woman
Who ought to die—

Deacon And nobody knows
But what she's dead—

Doctor The air will be cleaner
When she's gone—

Deacon But we dare not bury her
Till she's dead.

Landlady Come, young doctor
From the first floor front,
Come, dusty deacon
From the fourth floor back.
You take her heels
And I'll take her head—

Doctor and Deacon We'll carry her
And bury her—
If she's dead!

House They roll her up
In her old red quilt,
They carry her down
At a horizontal tilt.
She doesn't say, "Yes!"
And she doesn't say, "No!"
She doesn't say, "Gentlemen,
Where do we go?"

Doctor Out in the lot
Where the ash-cans die,
There, old woman,
There shall you lie!

Deacon Let's hurry away,
And never look behind
To see if her eyes
Are dead and blind,

To see if the quilt
Lies over her face.
Perhaps she'll groan,
Or move in her place—

House The room is empty
Where the old woman lay,
And I no longer
Smell like a tomb—

Landlady Doctor, deacon,
Can you say
Who'll pay the rent
For the old woman's room?

II

House The room is empty
Down the hall;
There are mice in the closet,
Ghosts in the wall.
A pretty little lady
Comes to see—

Woman Oh, what a dark room!
Not for me!

Landlady The room is large
And the rent is low;
There's a deacon above,
And a doctor below.

Deacon When the little mice squeak
I will pray—

Doctor I'll psycho-analyze
The ghosts away.

Landlady The bed is large
And the mattress deep;
Wrapped in a featherbed
You shall sleep.

Woman But here's the door
Without a key—
An unlocked room
Won't do for me!

Doctor Here's a bolt—

Deacon And here's a bar—

Landlady You'll sleep safely
Where you are!

Woman Good-night, gentlemen,
It's growing late.
Good-night, landlady,
Pray don't wait!
I'm going to bed—
I'll bolt the door
And sleep more soundly
Than ever before!

Deacon Good-night, madam,
I'll steal away—

Doctor Glad a pretty lady
Has come to stay!

House She lights a candle—
What do I see?
That cloak looks like
A quilt to me!
She climbs into bed
Where long she's lain;

She's come back home—
She won't leave again.
She's found once more
Her rightful place—
Same old lady
With a pretty new face.
Let the deacon pray
And the doctor talk—
The mice will squeak
And the ghosts will walk.
There's a crafty smile
On the landlady's face—
The old woman's gone
And she's filled her place!

Landlady It's nothing to me
If the old woman's dead—
I've somebody sleeping
In every bed!

WILBERT SNOW (1884-)

AGED NINETY YEARS

The loneliness of her old age flashed clear
The day her body took its pilgrimage
Out of the little house where she had lived
Into the sunless house of brick-red dust.

The darkened room was empty, save for ghosts
Of those she loved who hovered near the place,
Unseen but felt, trying familiar chairs.

Impassioned grief for those who die in youth,—
The grief that holds the village in a mood
As spellbound as a frozen Arctic river,
Was absent here; and only vague relief,

Mingled with tenderness like that which flows
From soft wet mornings after autumn rains,
Relief of water-lilies in a bowl,
Entered the quiet room where thin white hands
Were folded long and limp across her breast.

No throng of people followed to the grave,
A handful merely, these not friends of hers,
But of a daughter who watched over her
Throughout her failing years and closed her eyes,
Wishing perhaps a score of times the end
Might hasten on for respite of them both.

Within the half-forgotten ancient plot
The choking weeds and cemetery moss
Were blotting out the old New England names—
Seth, Adoniram, Hepzibah, Desire—
And curtaining the broken marble slabs.

Leaving the last grave in the double lot,
They turned their faces toward the flaming west
And felt the spirit of the autumn sunset
Put gently out its hand to push away
The specter of oblivion whose shade
Was stalking through these gray, neglected stones,
Foreshadowing like a winter night the hour
In which the proudest plinth the yard could boast
Would sink, like her, in chilly arms of earth.

JAY G. SIGMUND (1885-)

GRUBBER'S DAY

Morning came up as other mornings came:
A paling star above his wood-lot hill—
A score of lean swine clamoring for swill;
His woman there to start the cook-stove's flame.

Jay G. Sigmund

He lit his lantern and its rays were dim:
The sting was in his loins for night had kept
Him grubbing in his dreams while he had slept—
Stiffness and furrow-ache were kin to him.

The draught-horse in the stall gave out a neigh—
Sensing the man's approach . . . a brother beast
Yet happier with his proffered morning feast
Than he who filled the manger full of hay.

The milch-cows in their stanchions saw him quaff
A dram of harsh new brandy from a tin:
They lowed and grudged their master this small sin
And muzzled in the fodder-rack for chaff.

After the bleating ewes and lambs were fed
He threaded up the path . . . the kitchen smells
Were like the subtle things which lead to hells
By promising a respite on ahead.

Across the table sat the shrunken husk
Which mated with his body and his soil
And likewise took a few crusts for her toil,
Plodding her kitchen-rounds from dawn to dusk.

After the scalding morning sun was hung
He curved his calloused palms about a rein
And plodded down a slope; then back again
With groans and muttered curses on his tongue.

Even the hawk and rabbit left his fields;
Only the turkey vulture kept the sky:
The mouse and bug forsook his plot of rye,
Searching for fertile loam with better yields.

No hint of wild rose on his rutted slope—
No stray flint arrowhead upon the sand;
No spikenard for the blister on his hand
And not a lark to sound a note of hope.

When shadows on the hillside pointed noon
His horses turned their hoofs . . . he trailed behind;
Then at his frugal board again to find
The same plate with his cup and battered spoon.

Returning to his square of land once more
He found the sun had strengthened and the dust
Came in his face with every passing gust—
He found the corn rows longer than before.

The only sound the afternoon could give
Was croaking from the crows which stole his seed:
He wondered if the birds had known his need
Leaving in pity some that he might live.

Dusk was the same as morning; then his frame
Found half oblivion, the gift of night:
One day; a tiny fragment of a fight
With hill-clay always victor in the game.

LOUIS UNTERMEYER (1884-)

LONG FEUD

Where, without bloodshed, can there be
A more relentless enmity
Than the long feud fought silently

Between man and the growing grass.
Man's the aggressor, for he has
Weapons to humble and harass

The impudent spears that charge upon
His sacred privacy of lawn.
He mows them down, and they are gone

Only to lie in wait, although
He builds above and digs below
Where never a root would dare to go.

His are the triumphs till the day
There's no more grass to cut away,
And, weary of labor, weary of play,

Having exhausted every whim,
He stretches out each conquering limb.
And then the small grass covers him.

HANDS

Strange, how this smooth and supple joint can be
  Put to so many purposes. It checks
And rears the monsters of machinery
  And shapes the idle gallantries of sex.

Those hands that light the fuse and dig the trap,
  Fingers that spin the earth or plunge through shame—
And yours, that lie so lightly in your lap,
  Are only blood and dust—all are the same.

What mastery directs them through the world
  And gives these delicate bones so great a power? . . .
You drop your head. You sleep. Your hands are curled
  Loosely, like some half-opened, perfumed flower.

An hour ago they burned in mine and sent
  Armies with banners charging through my veins.
Now they are cool and white; they rest content,
  Curved in a smile. The mystery remains.

WATERS OF BABYLON

What presses about us here in the evening
  As you open a window and stare at a stone-gray sky,
And the streets give back the jangle of meaningless movement
  That is tired of life and almost too tired to die.

Night comes on, and even the night is wounded;
There, on its breast, it carries a curved, white scar.
What will you find out there that is not torn and anguished?
Can God be less distressed than the least of His creatures are?

Below are the blatant lights in a huddled squalor;
Above are futile fires in freezing space.
What can they give that you should look to them for compassion
Though you bare your heart and lift an imploring face?

They have seen, by countless waters and windows,
The women of your race facing a stony sky;
They have heard, for thousands of years, the voices of women
Asking them, "Why . . . ?"

Let the night be; it has neither knowledge nor pity.
One thing alone can hope to answer your fear;
It is that which struggles and blinds us and burns between us. . . .
Let the night be. Close the window, belovèd . . . Come here.

JEAN STARR UNTERMEYER
(1886-)

GOTHIC

Think not, my dearest, though I love to speak
With windy pride about the rock I use
To build with—oh, think not I would refuse
The gargoyles of your fancy. Every bleak
Cornice, and every archway I now seek
To have them softened with your arabesques,
Your graceful, happy scrollery on desks,
On altars, lecterns, niches and on pews.

Though I may labor with a fervor that
  Is mediæval in its piety,
Completion finds my temples gaunt and flat,
  Cold and erect. But in satiety
    Of sternness, I must turn to you, I find,
    To ornament the Gothic of my mind.

LAKE-SONG

The lapping of lake water
Is like the weeping of women,
The weeping of ancient women
Who grieved without rebellion.

The lake falls over the shore
Like tears on their curven bosoms.
Here is languid, luxurious wailing,
The wailing of kings' daughters.

So do we ever cry,
A soft, unmutinous crying,
When we know ourselves each a princess
Locked fast within her tower.

The lapping of lake water
Is like the weeping of women,
The fertile tears of women
That water the dreams of men.

LEONARD BACON (1887-)

AN AFTERNOON IN ARTILLERY WALK

(*Mary Milton loquitur*)

I think it is his blindness makes him so
He is so angry, and so querulous.
Yes, Father! I will look in Scaliger.
Yes, Cousin Phillips took the notes—I think—

May all the evil angels fly away
With Cousin Phillips to the Serbonian Bog,
Wherever that may be. And here am I
Locked in with him the livelong afternoon.
There's Anne gone limping with that love of hers,
Her master-carpenter, and Deborah
Stolen away. Yes, Father, 'tis an aleph
But the Greek glose on't in the Septuagint
Is something that I cannot quite make out.
The letter's rubbed.
Oh, thus to wear away
My soul and body with this dry-as-dust
This tearer-up of words, this plaguey seeker
After the things that no man understands.
'Tis April. I am seventeen years old,
And Abram Clark will come a-courting me.
Oh what a Hell a midday house can be!
Dusty and bright and dumb and shadowless,
Full of this sunshot dryness, like the soul
Of this old pedant here. I will not bear
Longer this tyranny of death in life
That drains my spirit like a succubus.
I am too full of blood and life for this—
This dull soul-gnawing discipline he sets
Upon our shoulders, the sad characters.
Chapter on chapter, blank and meaningless.
Now by the May-pole merry-makers run,
And the music throbs and pulses in light limbs,
And the girls' kirtles are lifted to the knee.
Ah would that I were blowsy with the heat,
Being bussed by some tall fellow, and kissing him
On his hot red lips—some bully royalist
With gold in 's purse and lace about his throat
And a long rapier for the Puritans.
Or I would wander by some cool yew-hedge,
Dallying with my lover all the afternoon,
And then to cards and supper—cinnamon,

Some delicate pastry, and an amber wine
Burning on these lips that know a year-long lent.
Then to the theatre, and Mistress Nell
That the king's fond of. Mayhap gentlemen
About would praise me, and I should hear them buzz,
And feel my cheek grow warm beneath my mask,
And glance most kindly—
  I was in a muse
I have the paper, father, and the pens.
Now for the damnable dictation. So!
"*High—on a throne—of royal state—*
which far
Outshone—the wealth of "Ormus"—S or Z?
How should I know the letter?—"*and of Ind.*
Or where—the gorgeous East—with richest hand
Showers—on her kings—barbaric—pearl and gold.
Satan exalted sate."

JOHN HALL WHEELOCK (1886-)

AUTUMN ALONG THE BEACHES

A year, with all its days, has come and gone
  Since last under the arch of heaven I stood
In the old ecstasy, and looked upon
  These endless waters, this bleak solitude.

All is unchanged: the sea-birds wheel and pass,
  The patient dunes go down along the sky
In wavering lines of green, from the scant grass
  A single cricket lifts his solemn cry.

Autumn is on the wind; the chilly air
  Is wide and vacant, the pale waters seem
Paler and lonelier—lonely and bare,
  The tawny beaches, fading like a dream.

On the right hand of heaven there is light—
And on the left is darkness and the gray
Cover of cloud; southward the sea is bright—
But northward sorrow and shadow all the way.

Dull blues and purples, glossy black and green,
On the one hand—and on the other, sheer
Glory of gold! The waters in between
Are doubtful—half in hope, and half in fear.

But always a cold light along the rim
Wells secretly, the under-heavens cast
Cold light along the verge under the dim
Borders of darkness where the clouds are massed.

Around one center the slow bulk revolves;
Far out, a haze curtains the mystery
Of some ecstatic deed—the cloud dissolves
And sheds his drifting rain upon the sea.

It is the bridal of heaven and ocean—brief
Is the rapt moment ere the gauzy veil,
Crumbling, is lifted. As with tremulous grief
Of parting, the divided wastes are pale.

Wan wastes of wave, and glimmering wastes that crowd
The worn horizon—passion and regret.
Sea-scud, and faltering light, and trailing cloud
Reluctant, where the old longing labors yet.

The slant rain slackens. From the hopeful, blue
Meadows of heaven, widening evermore,
A sudden shaft of light comes piercing through,
And points a shining finger down the shore.

Alternate gleam and shadow! Like a wand
The running radiance all along the line
Travels with soundless motion. Far beyond,
Headlands and dunes and brightening beaches shine.

Darkness is rolled away: the great banks move
  Northward, save for a few high streaks that show
The vault of heaven still higher far above—
  So high they seem, yet lie so far below.

They move like swans upon an azure lake—
  The bleak skies of the autumn afternoon
Wash 'round them in chill loveliness and make
  Their fleecy edges brighter, fading soon.

The room of the world is bare from bound to bound,
  A vacant chamber—heaven overhead
Is a blue ceiling, the heavens that wall it 'round
  Are blue, before me the blue floors are spread.

Blue mile on mile, from deep to azure height
  Eastward, the everlasting arches loom!
Blue mile on mile forever to the bright
  Limits! The world is like an empty room.

On the void sea no sail, no sign. Far out,
  A lone bird, through the shifting corridors
Of billowing water blown and tossed about,
  Wavers and veers along the windy floors.

Loneliness—endlessness—and mystery!
  No voice disturbs the silence of the sun.
No shadow is on the surface of the sea.
  The clouds are scattered and darkness is undone.

The huddled waters in their sorrow move
  At the wind's will that herds them without stay
Over the barren reaches, drove on drove—
  A myriad waves all moving the one way.

THE FISH-HAWK

On the large highway of the awful air that flows
  Unbounded between sea and heaven, while twilight screened
The majestic distances, he moved and had repose;
  On the huge wind of the Immensity he leaned
His steady body in long lapse of flight—and rose

Gradual, through broad gyres of ever-climbing rest,
  Up the clear stair of the eternal sky, and stood
Throned on the summit! Slowly, with his widening breast,
  Widened around him the enormous Solitude,
From the gray rim of ocean to the glowing west.

Headlands and capes forlorn of the far coast, the land
  Rolling her barrens toward the south, he, from his throne
Upon the gigantic wind, beheld: he hung—he fanned
  The abyss for mighty joy, to feel beneath him strown
Pale pastures of the sea, with heaven on either hand—

The world with all her winds and waters, earth and air,
  Fields, folds, and moving clouds. The awful and adored
Arches and endless aisles of vacancy, the fair
  Void of sheer heights and hollows hailed him as her lord
And lover in the highest, to whom all heaven lay bare!

Till from that tower of ecstasy, that baffled height,
  Stooping, he sank; and slowly on the world's wide way
Walked, with great wing on wing, the merciless, proud Might,
  Hunting the huddled and lone reaches for his prey
Down the dim shore—and faded in the crumbling light.

Slowly the dusk covered the land. Like a great hymn
  The sound of moving winds and waters was; the sea
Whispered a benediction, and the west grew dim
  Where evening lifted her clear candles quietly . . .
Heaven, crowded with stars, trembled from rim to rim.

JOYCE KILMER (1886-1918)

POETS

Vain is the chiming of forgotten bells
That the wind sways above a ruined shrine.
Vainer his voice in whom no longer dwells
Hunger that craves immortal Bread and Wine.

Light songs we breathe that perish with our breath
Out of our lips that have not kissed the rod.
They shall not live who have not tasted death;
They only sing who are struck dumb by God.

ALINE KILMER (1888-)

MY MIRROR

There is a mirror in my room
Less like a mirror than a tomb,
There are so many ghosts that pass
Across the surface of the glass.

When in the morning I arise
With circles round my tired eyes,
Seeking the glass to brush my hair
My mother's mother meets me there.

If in the middle of the day
I happen to go by that way,
I see a smile I used to know—
My mother, twenty years ago.

But when I rise by candlelight
To feed my baby in the night,
Then whitely in the glass I see
My dead child's face look out at me.

SHAEMAS O'SHEEL (1886-)

THEY WENT FORTH TO BATTLE

They went forth to battle, but they always fell;
Their eyes were fixed above the sullen shields;
Nobly they fought and bravely, but not well,
And sank heart-wounded by a subtle spell.
They knew not fear that to the foeman yields,
They were not weak, as one who vainly wields
A futile weapon; yet the sad scrolls tell
How on the hard-fought field they always fell.

It was a secret music that they heard,
A sad sweet plea for pity and for peace;
And that which pierced the heart was but a word,
Though the white breast was red-lipped where the sword
Pressed a fierce cruel kiss, to put surcease
On its hot thirst, but drank a hot increase.
Ah, they by some strange troubling doubt were stirred,
And died for hearing what no foeman heard.

They went forth to battle, but they always fell;
Their might was not the might of lifted spears;
Over the battle-clamor came a spell
Of troubling music, and they fought not well.
Their wreaths are willows and their tribute, tears;
Their names are old sad stories in men's ears;
Yet they will scatter the red hordes of Hell,
Who went to battle forth and always fell.

ORRICK JOHNS (1887-)

LITTLE THINGS

There's nothing very beautiful and nothing very gay
About the rush of faces in the town by day;

But a light tan cow in a pale green mead,
That is very beautiful, beautiful indeed . . .
And the soft March wind and the low March mist
Are better than kisses in a dark street kissed . . .
The fragrance of the forest when it wakes at dawn,
The fragrance of a trim green village lawn,
The hearing of the murmur of the rain at play—
These things are beautiful, beautiful as day!
And I shan't stand waiting for love or scorn
When the feast is laid for a day new-born . . .
Oh, better let the little things I loved when little
Return when the heart finds the great things brittle;
And better is a temple made of bark and thong
Than a tall stone temple that may stand too long.

THE INTERPRETER

In the very early morning when the light was low
She got all together and she went like snow,
Like snow in the springtime on a sunny hill,
And we were only frightened and can't think still.

We can't think quite that the katydids and frogs
And the little crying chickens and the little grunting hogs,
And the other living things that she spoke for to us
Have nothing more to tell her since it happened thus.

She never is around for any one to touch,
But of ecstasy and longing she too knew much . . .
And always when any one has time to call his own
She will come and be beside him as quiet as a stone.

MOTHERS AND CHILDREN

Born are we of fire
And orderly desire,
And on that day
The leaves all pray

And the stars all wait
By the smallest wooden gate
To listen to the cry
Of a woman by and by.

And they gather in the door to see his little feet
And go away and whisper there are none more sweet;
And they peep in his eyes and laugh like a lord
To see another human that is not yet bored . . .
Old men and ladies, they go that way
And very, very silly are the things they say!

We are born of woman
And they say she is human
But we very soon know
She is more than so . . .
For we drink from her cup
With the top closed up
And no matter how we press
It grows no less!

And she sits by the sky where the wind comes through
And knows what we want by the things we do.
And the sound of her voice is sweeter than her milk,
And the feel of her face is like smooth white silk . . .
And a man may be ninety with a very long beard
And not be any better than his mother feared.

WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT (1886-)

THE WOODCUTTER'S WIFE

Times she'll sit quiet by the hearth, and times
She'll ripple with a fit of twinkling rhymes
And rise and pirouette and flirt her hand,
Strut jackdaw-like, or stamp a curt command
Or, from behind my chair, suddenly blind me;
Then, when I turn, be vanished from behind me.

Times she'll be docile as the gentlest thing
That ever blinked in fur or folded wing,
And then, like lightning in the dead of night,
Fill with wild, crackling, intermitting light
My mind and soul and senses,—and next be
Aloof, askance as a dryad in a tree.

Then she'll be gone for days; when next I turn,
There, coaxing yellow butter from the churn,
Rubbing to silver every pan of tin,
Or conjuring color from the rooms within
Through innocent flowers, she'll hum about the house
Bright-eyed and secret as a velvet mouse.

'Tis not your will They do,—no, nor the Will
That hushes Anselm's chapel overhill.
Something that drifts in clouds, that sings in rain,
That laughs in sunlight, shudders in the pain
Of desolate seas, or broods in basking earth
Governs Their melancholy and Their mirth.

Elusive still! Elusive as my reason
For trudging woodward in or out of season
To swing the ringing ax, as year by year
The inexplicable end draws slowly near,
And, in between, to think and think about it,—
Life's puzzling dream,—deride, believe, and doubt it.

But if I leave her seriously alone
She comes quite near, preëmpts some woodland stone,
Spreads out her kirtle like a shimmering dress
And fills my mind's remorseful emptiness
With marvelous jewels made of words and wit
Till all my being sings because of it,

Sings of the way her bronze hair waves about
And how her amber-lighted eyes peer out;

Sings of her sudden laughter floating wild,
Of all her antics of a fairy child,
Of her uplifted head and swift, demure
Silence and awe, than purity more pure.

So I must scratch my head and drop my ax;
While in her hands my will is twisted wax;
So, when she goes, deaf, dumb and blind I sit
Watching her empty arm-chair opposite,
Witched by evasive brightness in the brain
That grows full glory when she comes again.

THE FAWN IN THE SNOW

The brown-dappled fawn
Bereft of the doe
Shivers in blue shadow
Of the glaring snow,

His whole world bright
As a jewel, and hard,
Diamond white,
Turquoise barred.

The trees are black,
Their needles gold,
Their boughs crack
In the keen cold.

The brown-dappled fawn
Bereft of the doe
Trembles and shudders
At the bright snow.

The air whets
The warm throat,
The frost frets
At the smooth coat.

Brown agate eyes
Opened round
Agonize
At the cold ground,

At the cold heaven
Enameled pale,
At the earth shriven
By the snowy gale,

At magic glitter
Burning to blind,
At beauty bitter
As an almond rind.

Fawn, fawn,
Seek for your south,
For kind dawn
With her cool mouth,

For green sod
With gold and blue
Dappled, as God
Has dappled you,

For slumbrous ease,
Firm turf to run
Through fruited trees
Into full sun!

The shivering fawn
Paws at the snow.
South and dawn
Lie below;

Richness and mirth,
Dearth forgiven,
A happy earth,
A warm heaven;

The sleet streams,
The snow flies;
The fawn dreams
With wide brown eyes.

PEARL DIVER

I had an image of the bright, bare Day
Like a tall diver poised above the surge
Of blackest night, where its vast fluctuant verge
Lapped against heaven's ramparts, broad and gray.
Flickering with ghostly fires, beneath him lay
That gulf where light must drown that light emerge.
His nimbused radiance stooped to dare its gurge,
Plunged, and flashed deep through showers of starry spray.

Swift his transfigured contours clove the dark,
Suffusing fathom on fathom of night aswirl
With tints of rose, all tremoring into one,
Till from cloud floors he plucked a filmy pearl
And held it high for earth and heaven to mark,—
The cold globe of the winter-shrunken sun.

JUDGMENT

Down the deep steps of stone, through iron doors,
I entered that red room and saw the rack,
And round the walls I saw them sit in black,
The immutable and urgent councilors.
My heart was clotted with an old remorse,
Despair a vulture fast upon my back.
I saw my body like an empty sack
Tossed disarticulate on grated floors.

But even a wilder wonder at this crime,
Tried in the dungeon of my own grim life,
Woke, as your memory awoke with tune

That crazed the very walls. I stared through Time
Like to a man who stands with smoking knife
Above his dead, and sees the rising moon.

ELINOR WYLIE (1887-1928)

PROPHECY

I shall lie hidden in a hut
In the middle of an alder wood,
With the back door blind and bolted shut,
And the front door locked for good.

I shall lie folded like a saint,
Lapped in a scented linen sheet,
On a bedstead striped with bright-blue paint,
Narrow and cold and neat.

The midnight will be glassy black
Behind the panes, with wind about
To set his mouth against a crack
And blow the candle out.

LET NO CHARITABLE HOPE

Now let no charitable hope
Confuse my mind with images
Of eagle and of antelope:
I am in nature none of these.

I was, being human, born alone;
I am, being woman, hard beset;
I live by squeezing from a stone
The little nourishment I get.

In masks outrageous and austere
The years go by in single file;
But none has merited my fear,
And none has quite escaped my smile.

CASTILIAN

Velasquez took a pliant knife
And scraped his palette clean;
He said, "I lead a dog's own life
Painting a king and queen."

He cleaned his palette with oily rags
And oakum from Seville wharves;
"I am sick of painting painted hags
And bad ambiguous dwarves.

"The sky is silver, the clouds are pearl,
Their locks are looped with rain.
I will not paint Maria's girl
For all the money in Spain."

He washed his face in water cold,
His hands in turpentine;
He squeezed out colour like coins of gold
And colour like drops of wine.

Each colour lay like a little pool
On the polished cedar wood;
Clear and pale and ivory-cool
Or dark as solitude.

He burnt the rags in the fireplace
And leaned from the window high;
He said, "I like that gentleman's face
Who wears his cap awry."

This is the gentleman, there he stands,
Castilian, sombre-caped,
With arrogant eyes, and narrow hands
Miraculously shaped.

O VIRTUOUS LIGHT

A private madness has prevailed
Over the pure and valiant mind;
The instrument of reason failed
And the star-gazing eyes struck blind.

Sudden excess of light has wrought
Confusion in the secret place
Where the slow miracles of thought
Take shape through patience into grace.

Mysterious as steel and flint
The birth of this destructive spark
Whose inward growth has power to print
Strange suns upon the natural dark.

O break the walls of sense in half
And make the spirit fugitive!
This light begotten of itself
Is not a light by which to live!

The fire of farthing tallow dips
Dispels the menace of the skies
So it illuminate the lips
And enter the discerning eyes.

O virtuous light, if thou be man's
Or matter of the meteor stone,
Prevail against this radiance
Which is engendered of its own!

FAREWELL, SWEET DUST

Now I have lost you, I must scatter
All of you on the air henceforth;
Not that to me it can ever matter
But it's only fair to the rest of earth.

Now especially, when it is winter
And the sun's not half so bright as he was,
Who wouldn't be glad to find a splinter
That once was you, in the frozen grass?

Snowflakes, too, will be softer feathered,
Clouds, perhaps, will be whiter plumed;
Rain, whose brilliance you caught and gathered,
Purer silver have reassumed.

Farewell, sweet dust; I was never a miser:
Once, for a minute, I made you mine:
Now you are gone, I am none the wiser
But the leaves of the willow are bright as wine.

CONFESSION OF FAITH

I lack the braver mind
That dares to find
The lover friend, and kind.

I fear him to the bone;
I lie alone
By the beloved one,

And, breathless for suspense,
Erect defense
Against love's violence

Whose silences portend
A bloody end
For lover never friend.

But, in default of faith,
In futile breath,
I dream no ill of Death.

MALEDICTION UPON MYSELF

Now if the dull and thankless heart declare
That this fair city is no longer fair
Because the month has peopled it with shadows
And swept the quality to hills and meadows:
Yea, if it cry in its ingratitude
That holy beauty is no longer good
But that it is degraded and cast down
Because it treads the pavement of the town:
If it accept the rank ignoble rule
That beauty is no longer beautiful
Because it is not straitlaced and aloof
But sets its sandal on a London roof
And takes polluted Thames to be its mirror:
If the vile heart is guilty of this error
I here pronounce upon its inmost nerve
The malediction which it must deserve.
Loosen its strings: let it no longer be
The instrument of mortal ecstasy:
Empty its veins of rapture, and replace
The fine elixir with a foul and base
Till the true heaven never more descends
In delicate pulses to my finger ends,
Or flutters like a feather at my heel.
Bind blindness on my forehead: set a seal
On each of my two eyes which have forsworn
The light, and darken them with disks of horn.
Stop up my nostrils in default of breath
With graveyard powder and compacted death,
And stuff my mouth with ruin for a gag,
And break my ankles of a running stag:
Let the long legs of which I am so proud
Be bended, and the lifted throat be bowed:
Lower the arrogant pennon which I bear
Blown backward in the fringes of my hair

And let its silk be trampled to a skein
Of serpents knotted in corruptive pain:
Let these my words unwind the virtuous mesh
Which knits the spirit to the naughty flesh:
Let me dismember me in sacred wrath
And scatter me in pieces for a path
On which the step of that I have denied
Descends in silver to his proper bride.

FRANK ERNEST HILL (1888-)

UPPER AIR

High, pale, imperial places of slow cloud
And windless wells of sunlit silence . . . Sense
Of some aware, half-scornful Permanence
Past which we flow like water that is loud
A moment on the granite. Nothing here
Beats with the pulse that beat in us below;
That was a flame; this is the soul of snow
Immortalized in moveless atmosphere.

Yet we shall brood upon this haunt of wings
When love, like perfume washed away in rain,
Dies on the years. Still we shall come again,
Seeking the clouds as we have sought the sea,
Asking the peace of these immortal things
That will not mix with our mortality.

CLOUDS

Earth dies to haze below, the cables sing,
The motor drones like some gigantic fly,
A monstrous mound of vapor bathes my wing
And backward with the wind goes sweeping by;
Above the voids white crags go sharp and dim,
Oaks wave, the discs of rootless islands swim,

And arches climb and crumble in the sun
Over gray dinosaur and mastodon.

Earth, dim and fluid, seals the ragged spaces
Where misty islands meet and part below;
Cities that mask eternal hungering faces,
Black wood and water mingle in its flow.
Down, down ten mountain heights beneath this floor
Of marble-smooth and marble-solid air,
The shout and pride and color are no more
Than moon-faint mottlings. Distance does not spare.
They are the clouds now. Ice-lipped I ride
A window-floor immeasurably wide,
Firmer than rooted stone. And through its glass
I watch their formless, sunken shadows pass.

THE EARTH WILL STAY THE SAME

The earth will stay the same for all our flying;
We shall come back to earth when we are done
And take gray streets again for air and sun,
Give up the truth of space for dust and lying.
A girl's clear look will find us in a crowd,
The western moon will die in soundless dawn;
We shall live briefly then with what is gone,
Riding our seas of light and wind and cloud.
But mostly we shall live with earth. Our hands
Shall keep her rhythm, eyes and ears shall know
Her shafts of steel, the singing of her cars,
As, far from rain-washed forests, sea-washed sands,
Dreams in a house upon a sleeper grow
Who made his bed for years beneath the stars.

WILLARD WATTLES (1888-)

THE BUILDER

Smoothing a cypress beam
With a scarred hand,
I saw a carpenter
In a far land.

Down past the flat roofs
Poured the white sun;
But still he bent his back,
The patient one.

And I paused surprised
In that queer place
To find an old man
With a haunting face.

"Who art thou, carpenter,
Of the bowed head;
And what buildest thou?"
"Heaven," he said.

LEW SARETT (1888-)

FEUD

Poor wayworn creature! Oh, sorely harried deer,
What drove you, quivering like a poplar-blade,
To refuge with my herd? What holds you here
Within my meadow, broken and afraid?

Tilting your nose to tainted air, you thrill
And freeze to wailing wolves! Fear you the sound
Of the coyotes eager for a tender kill?
Or yet the baying of the hunter's hound?

Lew Sarett

Let fall your anguish, harried one, and rest;
Bed yourself down among your kin, my cattle;
Sleep unperturbed. No spoiler shall molest
You here this night, for I shall wage your battle.

There was a day when coyotes in a pack,
Wolves of another hue, another breed,
With Christ upon their lips, set out to track
Me down and drop me, for my blood, my creed.

Oh, hunted creature, once I knew the thud
Of padded feet that put you into flight,
The bugle-cry, suffused with lust for blood,
That trembled in the silver bell of night.

I knew your frenzied rocky run, the burst
Of lungs, the rivers of fire in every vein;
I knew your foaming lip, your boundless thirst,
The rain of molten-hammering in your brain.

Abide with me, then, against the wolves' return,
For I shall carry on the feud for you;
And it shall be, to me, of small concern
If the wolf-hearts walk on four soft feet or two.

Oh, let them come! And I shall burn their flanks
With a blast of hell to end their revelry,
And whistle molten silver through their ranks,
Laughing—one round for you, and one for me.

HERVEY ALLEN (1889-)

WHIM ALLEY

Whim Alley once led into Danger Court
Loud with the raucous talk of cockatoos,
Where bearded Jews a-squat in alcove shops
Sat waiting like royal falcons in a mews.

Softly as rain the voweled Portuguese
Fell from their red-ripe lips with eastern news
Of galleons whose names were melodies—
Softly—between the shrieks of cockatoos.
Who cared for royal navigation laws
In Danger Court—for what the Soldan said—
Or papal lines between the east and west?
Abram out-Shylocked Isaac with applause,
And clutched the sweated doubloons to his chest,
Whose late lamented owners were scarce dead.
For there were smugglers' bargains to be made
Where leaping arches looped along the walls,
While sunlight smouldered down the long arcade
And dizened into flame on Spanish shawls,
And what the sequin brought in Louis d'or
Was news,—and rumors passed from Trebizond,
While Rachel clinked brass anklets in a door
With a straight glimpse of blue sea just beyond.
Dark sailors passed with tang of wine and tar,
And merchants with wide hats and wider fringes,
And two black Sambos smoked the same cigar
Upon a chest with three locks and five hinges.
Vanished in air! Those arches roof a cow,
To parrots' rings the frowsy hens resort;
Whim Alley leads to less than nothing now,
And only shadows dwell in Danger Court.

EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY
(1892-)

THE BLUE-FLAG IN THE BOG

God had called us, and we came;
  Our loved Earth to ashes left;
Heaven was a neighbor's house,
  Open flung to us, bereft.

Gay the lights of Heaven showed,
And 'twas God who walked ahead;
Yet I wept along the road,
Wanting my own house instead.

Wept unseen, unheeded cried,
"All you things my eyes have kissed,
Fare you well! We meet no more,
Lovely, lovely tattered mist!

Weary wings that rise and fall
All day long above the fire!"—
Red with heat was every wall,
Rough with heat was every wire—

"Fare you well, you little winds
That the flying embers chase!
Fare you well, you shuddering day,
With your hands before your face!

And, ah, blackened by strange blight,
Or to a false sun unfurled,
Now forevermore goodbye,
All the gardens in the world!

On the windless hills of Heaven,
That I have no wish to see,
White, eternal lilies stand,
By a lake of ebony.

But the Earth forevermore
Is a place where nothing grows,—
Dawn will come, and no bud break;
Evening, and no blossom close.

Spring will come, and wander slow
Over an indifferent land,
Stand beside an empty creek,
Hold a dead seed in her hand."

God had called us, and we came,
But the blessed road I trod
Was a bitter road to me,
And at heart I questioned God.

"Though in Heaven," I said, "be all
That the heart would most desire,
Held Earth naught save souls of sinners
Worth the saving from a fire?

Withered grass,—the wasted growing!
Aimless ache of laden boughs!"
Little things God had forgotten
Called me, from my burning house.

"Though in Heaven," I said, "be all
That the eye could ask to see,
All the things I ever knew
Are this blaze in back of me."

"Though in Heaven," I said, "be all
That the ear could think to lack,
All the things I ever knew
Are this roaring at my back."

It was God who walked ahead,
Like a shepherd to the fold;
In his footsteps fared the weak,
And the weary and the old,

Glad enough of gladness over,
Ready for the peace to be,—
But a thing God had forgotten
Was the growing bones of me.

And I drew a bit apart,
And I lagged a bit behind,
And I thought on Peace Eternal,
Lest He look into my mind;

And I gazed upon the sky,
  And I thought of Heavenly Rest,—
And I slipped away like water
  Through the fingers of the blest!

All their eyes were fixed on Glory,
  Not a glance brushed over me;
"Alleluia! Alleluia!"
  Up the road,—and I was free.

And my heart rose like a freshet,
  And it swept me on before,
Giddy as a whirling stick,
  Till I felt the earth once more.

All the Earth was charred and black,
  Fire had swept from pole to pole;
And the bottom of the sea
  Was as brittle as a bowl;

And the timbered mountain-top
  Was as naked as a skull,—
Nothing left, nothing left,
  Of the Earth so beautiful!

"Earth," I said, "how can I leave you?"
  "You are all I have," I said;
"What is left to take my mind up,
  Living always, and you dead?"

"Speak!" I said, "Oh, tell me something!
  Make a sign that I can see!
For a keepsake! To keep always!
  Quick!—before God misses me!"

And I listened for a voice;—
  But my heart was all I heard;
Not a screech-owl, not a loon,
  Not a tree-toad said a word.

And I waited for a sign;—
  Coals and cinders, nothing more;
And a little cloud of smoke
  Floating on a valley floor.

And I peered into the smoke
  Till it rotted, like a fog:—
There, encompassed round by fire,
  Stood a blue-flag in a bog!

Little flames came wading out,
  Straining, straining towards its stem,
But it was so blue and tall
  That it scorned to think of them!

Red and thirsty were their tongues,
  As the tongues of wolves must be,
But it was so blue and tall—
  Oh, I laughed, I cried, to see!

All my heart became a tear,
  All my soul became a tower,
Never loved I anything
  As I loved that tall blue flower!

It was all the little boats
  That had ever sailed the sea,
It was all the little books
  That had gone to school with me;

On its roots like iron claws
  Rearing up so blue and tall,—
It was all the gallant Earth
  With its back against a wall!

In a breath, ere I had breathed,—
  Oh, I laughed, I cried, to see!—
I was kneeling at its side,
  And it leaned its head on me!

Crumbling stones and sliding sand
  Is the road to Heaven now;
Icy at my straining knees
  Drags the awful under-tow;

Soon but stepping-stones of dust
  Will the road to Heaven be,—
Father, Son and Holy Ghost,
  Reach a hand and rescue me!

"There—there, my blue-flag flower;
  Hush—hush—go to sleep;
That is only God you hear,
  Counting up His folded sheep!

Lullabye—lullabye—
  That is only God that calls
Missing me, seeking me,
  Ere the road to nothing falls!

He will set His mighty feet
  Firmly on the sliding sand;
Like a little frightened bird
  I will creep into His hand;

I will tell Him all my grief,
  I will tell him all my sin;
He will give me half his robe
  For a cloak to wrap you in.

Lullabye—lullabye—"
  Rocks the burnt-out planet free!
Father, Son and Holy Ghost,
  Reach a hand and rescue me!

Ah, the voice of love at last!
  Lo, at last the face of light!
And the whole of His white robe
  For a cloak against the night!

And upon my heart asleep
All the things I ever knew!—
"Holds Heaven not some cranny, Lord,
For a flower so tall and blue?"

All's well and all's well!
Gay the lights of Heaven show!
In some moist and Heavenly place
We will set it out to grow.

MORITURUS

If I could have
Two things in one:
The peace of the grave,
And the light of the sun;

My hands across
My thin breast-bone,
But aware of the moss
Invading the stone,

Aware of the flight
Of the golden flicker
With his wing to the light;
To hear him nicker

And drum with his bill
On the rotted willow;
Snug and still
On a grey pillow

Deep in the clay
Where digging is hard,
Out of the way,—
The blue shard

Of a broken platter—
  If I might be
Insensate matter
  With sensate me

Sitting within,
  Harking and prying,
I might begin
  To dicker with dying.

For the body at best
  Is a bundle of aches,
Longing for rest;
  It cries when it wakes

"Alas, 'tis light!"
  At set of sun
"Alas, 'tis night,
  And nothing done!"

Death, however,
  Is a spongy wall,
Is a sticky river,
  Is nothing at all.

Summon the weeper,
  Wail and sing;
Call him Reaper,
  Angel, King;

Call him Evil
  Drunk to the lees,
Monster, Devil,—
  He is less than these.

Call him Thief,
  The Maggot in the Cheese,
The Canker in the Leaf,—
  He is less than these.

Dusk without sound,
  Where the spirit by pain
Uncoiled, is wound
  To spring again;

The mind enmeshed
  Laid straight in repose,
And the body refreshed
  By feeding the rose,—

These are but visions;
  These would be
The grave's derisions,
  Could the grave see.

Here is the wish
  Of one that died
Like a beached fish
  On the ebb of the tide:

That he might wait
  Till the tide came back,
To see if a crate,
  Or a bottle, or a black

Boot, or an oar,
  Or an orange peel
Be washed ashore. . . .
  About his heel

The sand slips;
  The last he hears
From the world's lips
  Is the sand in his ears.

What thing is little?—
  The aphis hid
In a house of spittle?
  The hinge of the lid

Of the spider's eye
At the spider's birth?
"Greater am I
By the earth's girth

"Than Mighty Death!"
All creatures cry
That can summon breath;—
And speak no lie.

For He is nothing;
He is less
Than Echo answering
"Nothingness!"—

Less than the heat
Of the furthest star
To the ripening wheat;
Less by far,

When all the lipping
Is said and sung,
Than the sweat dripping
From a dog's tongue.

This being so,
And I being such,
I would liever go
On a cripple's crutch,

Lopped and felled;
Liever be dependent
On a chair propelled
By a surly attendant

With a foul breath,
And be spooned my food,
Than go with Death
Where nothing good,

Not even the thrust
  Of the summer gnat,
Consoles the dust
  For being that.

Needy, lonely,
  Stitched by pain,
Left with only
  The drip of the rain

Out of all I had;
  The books of the wise,
Badly read
  By other eyes,

Lewdly bawled
  At my closing ear;
Hated, called
  A lingerer here;—

Withstanding Death
  Till Life be gone,
I shall treasure my breath,
  I shall linger on.

I shall bolt my door
  With a bolt and a cable;
I shall block my door
  With a bureau and a table;

With all my might
  My door shall be barred.
I shall put up a fight,
  I shall take it hard.

With his hand on my mouth
  He shall drag me forth,
Shrieking to the south
  And clutching at the north.

PART SEVEN

AMY LOWELL (1874-1925)

MUSIC

The neighbour sits in his window and plays the flute.
From my bed I can hear him,
And the round notes flutter and tap about the room,
And hit against each other,
Blurring to unexpected chords.
It is very beautiful,
With the little flute-notes all about me,
In the darkness.

In the daytime,
The neighbour eats bread and onions with one hand
And copies music with the other.
He is fat and has a bald head,
So I do not look at him,
But run quickly past his window.
There is always the sky to look at,
Or the water in the well!

But when night comes and he plays his flute,
I think of him as a young man,
With gold seals hanging from his watch,
And a blue coat with silver buttons.
As I lie in my bed
The flute-notes push against my ears and lips,
And I go to sleep, dreaming.

CHINOISERIES

Reflections

When I looked into your eyes,
I saw a garden

With peonies, and tinkling pagodas,
And round-arched bridges
Over still lakes.
A woman sat beside the water
In a rain-blue, silken garment.
She reached through the water
To pluck the crimson peonies
Beneath the surface,
But as she grasped the stems,
They jarred and broke into white-green ripples;
And as she drew out her hand,
The water-drops dripping from it
Stained her rain-blue dress like tears.

Falling Snow

The snow whispers about me,
And my wooden clogs
Leave holes behind me in the snow.
But no one will pass this way
Seeking my footsteps,
And when the temple bell rings again
They will be covered and gone.

Hoar-Frost

In the cloud-gray mornings
I heard the herons flying;
And when I came into my garden,
My silken outer-garment
Trailed over withered leaves.
A dried leaf crumbles at a touch,
But I have seen many Autumns
With herons blowing like smoke
Across the sky.

LILACS

Lilacs,
False blue,

White,
Purple,
Colour of lilac,
Your great puffs of flowers
Are everywhere in this my New England.
Among your heart-shaped leaves
Orange orioles hop like music-box birds and sing
Their little weak soft songs;
In the crooks of your branches
The bright eyes of song sparrows sitting on spotted eggs
Peer restlessly through the light and shadow
Of all Springs.
Lilacs in dooryards
Holding quiet conversations with an early moon;
Lilacs watching a deserted house
Settling sideways into the grass of an old road;
Lilacs, wind-beaten, staggering under a lopsided shock of bloom
Above a cellar dug into a hill.
You are everywhere.
You were everywhere.
You tapped the window when the preacher preached his sermon,
And ran along the road beside the boy going to school.
You stood by pasture-bars to give the cows good milking,
You persuaded the housewife that her dish pan was of silver
And her husband an image of pure gold.
You flaunted the fragrance of your blossoms
Through the wide doors of Custom Houses—
You, and sandal-wood, and tea,
Charging the noses of quill-driving clerks
When a ship was in from China.
You called to them: "Goose-quill men, goose-quill men,
May is a month for flitting,"
Until they writhed on their high stools
And wrote poetry on their letter-sheets behind the propped-up ledgers.
Paradoxical New England clerks,

Writing inventories in ledgers, reading the "Song of Solomon"
at night,
So many verses before bed-time,
Because it was the Bible.
The dead fed you
Amid the slant stones of graveyards.
Pale ghosts who planted you
Came in the night-time
And let their thin hair blow through your clustered stems.
You are of the green sea,
And of the stone hills which reach a long distance.
You are of elm-shaded streets with little shops where they sell
kites and marbles,
You are of great parks where everyone walks and nobody is at
home.
You cover the blind sides of greenhouses
And lean over the top to say a hurry-word through the glass
To your friends, the grapes, inside.

Lilacs,
False blue,
White,
Purple,
Colour of lilac,
You have forgotten your Eastern origin,
The veiled women with eyes like panthers,
The swollen, aggressive turbans of jewelled Pashas.
Now you are a very decent flower,
A reticent flower,
A curiously clear-cut, candid flower,
Standing beside clean doorways,
Friendly to a house-cat and a pair of spectacles,
Making poetry out of a bit of moonlight
And a hundred or two sharp blossoms.

Maine knows you,
Has for years and years;

New Hampshire knows you,
And Massachusetts
And Vermont.
Cape Cod starts you along the beaches to Rhode Island;
Connecticut takes you from a river to the sea.
You are brighter than apples,
Sweeter than tulips,
You are the great flood of our souls
Bursting above the leaf-shapes of our hearts,
You are the smell of all Summers,
The love of wives and children,
The recollection of the gardens of little children,
You are State Houses and Charters
And the familiar treading of the foot to and fro on a road it knows.
May is lilac here in New England,
May is a thrush singing "Sun up!" on a tip-top ash-tree,
May is white clouds behind pine-trees
Puffed out and marching upon a blue sky.
May is a green as no other,
May is much sun through small leaves,
May is soft earth,
And apple-blossoms,
And windows open to a South wind.
May is a full light wind of lilac
From Canada to Narragansett Bay.

Lilacs,
False blue,
White,
Purple,
Colour of lilac,
Heart-leaves of lilac all over New England,
Roots of lilac under all the soil of New England,
Lilac in me because I am New England,
Because my roots are in it,
Because my leaves are of it,

Because my flowers are for it,
Because it is my country
And I speak to it of itself
And sing of it with my own voice
Since certainly it is mine.

CARL SANDBURG (1878-)

CABOOSE THOUGHTS

It's going to come out all right—do you know?
The sun, the birds, the grass—they know.
They get along—and we'll get along.

Some days will be rainy and you will sit waiting
And the letter you wait for won't come,
And I will sit watching the sky tear off grey and grey
And the letter I wait for won't come.

There will be ac-ci-dents.
I know ac-ci-dents are coming.
Smash-ups, signals wrong, washouts, trestles rotten,
Red and yellow ac-ci-dents.
But somehow and somewhere the end of the run
The train gets put together again
And the caboose and the green tail lights
Fade down the right of way like a new white hope.

I never heard a mocking bird in Kentucky
Spilling its heart in the morning.

I never saw the snow on Chimborazo.
It's a high white Mexican hat, I hear.

I never had supper with Abe Lincoln.
Nor a dish of soup with Jim Hill.

But I've been around.
I know some of the boys here who can go a little.
I know girls good for a burst of speed any time.

I heard Williams and Walker
Before Walker died in the bughouse.

I knew a mandolin player
Working in a barber shop in an Indiana town,
And he thought he had a million dollars.

I knew a hotel girl in Des Moines.
She had eyes; I saw her and said to myself
The sun rises and her heart went pit-a-pat.
We took away the money for a prize waltz at a Brotherhood dance.
She had eyes; she was safe as the bridge over the Mississippi at Burlington; I married her.

Last summer we took the cushions going west.
Pike's Peak is a big old stone, believe me.
It's fastened down; something you can count on.

It's going to come out all right—do you know?
The sun, the birds, the grass—they know.
They get along—and we'll get along.

WILDERNESS

There is a wolf in me . . . fangs pointed for tearing gashes . . . a red tongue for raw meat . . . and the hot lapping of blood—I keep this wolf because the wilderness gave it to me and the wilderness will not let it go.

There is a fox in me . . . a silver-grey fox . . . I sniff and guess . . . I pick things out of the wind and air . . . I nose in the dark night and take sleepers and eat them and hide the feathers . . . I circle and loop and doublecross.

There is a hog in me—a snout and a belly . . . a machinery for eating and grunting . . . a machinery for sleeping satisfied in the sun—I got this too from the wilderness and the wilderness will not let it go.

There is a fish in me . . . I know I came from salt-blue water-gates . . . I scurried with shoals of herring . . . I blew waterspouts with porpoises . . . before land was . . . before the water went down . . . before Noah . . . before the first chapter of Genesis.

There is a baboon in me . . . clambering-clawed . . . dog-faced . . . yawping a galoot's hunger . . . hairy under the armpits . . . here are the hawk-eyed hankering men . . . here are the blond and blue-eyed women . . . here they hide curled asleep waiting . . . ready to snarl and kill . . . ready to sing and give milk . . . waiting—I keep the baboon because the wilderness says so.

There is an eagle in me and a mocking-bird . . . and the eagle flies among the Rocky Mountains of my dreams and fights among the Sierra crags of what I want . . . and the mocking-bird warbles in the early forenoon before the dew is gone, warbles in the underbrush of my Chattanoogas of hope, gushes over the blue Ozark foothills of my wishes—And I got the eagle and the mocking-bird from the wilderness.

O, I got a zoo, I got a menagerie, inside my ribs, under my bony head, under my red-valve heart—and I got something else; it is a man-child heart, a woman-child heart: it is a father and mother and lover: it came from God-Knows-Where: it is going to God-Knows-Where— For I am the keeper of the zoo: I say yes and no: I sing and kill and work: I am a pal of the world: I came from the wilderness.

PRAYERS OF STEEL

Lay me on an anvil, O God!
Beat me and hammer me into a crowbar.
Let me pry loose old walls;
Let me lift and loosen old foundations.

Lay me on an anvil, O God!
Beat me and hammer me into a steel spike.
Drive me into the girders that hold a skyscraper together.
Take red-hot rivets and fasten me into the central girders.
Let me be the great nail holding a skyscraper through blue nights into white stars.

PSALM OF THOSE WHO GO FORTH BEFORE DAYLIGHT

The policeman buys shoes slow and careful; the teamster buys gloves slow and careful; they take care of their feet and hands; they live on their feet and hands.

The milkman never argues; he works alone and no one speaks to him; the city is asleep when he is on the job; he puts a bottle on six hundred porches and calls it a day's work; he climbs two hundred wooden stairways; two horses are company for him; he never argues.

The rolling-mill men and the sheet-steel men are brothers of cinders; they empty cinders out of their shoes after the day's work; they ask their wives to fix burnt holes in the knees of their trousers; their necks and ears are covered with a smut; they scour their necks and ears, they are brothers of cinders.

OLD TIMERS

I am an ancient reluctant conscript.

On the soup wagons of Xerxes I was a cleaner of pans.

On the march of Miltiades' phalanx I had a haft and head;
I had a bristling gleaming spear-handle.

Red-headed Cæsar picked me for a teamster.
He said, "Go to work, you Tuscan bastard!
Rome calls for a man who can drive horses."

The units of conquest led by Charles the Twelfth,
The whirling whimsical Napoleonic columns:
They saw me one of the horseshoers.

I trimmed the feet of a white horse Bonaparte swept the night
stars with.

Lincoln said, "Get into the game; your nation takes you."
And I drove a wagon and team, and I had my arm shot off
At Spottsylvania Court House.

I am an ancient reluctant conscript.

FOUR PRELUDES ON PLAYTHINGS OF THE WIND

"The past is a bucket of ashes."

I

The woman named Tomorrow
Sits with a hairpin in her teeth
And takes her time,
And does her hair the way she wants it,
And fastens at last the last braid and coil,
And puts the hairpin where it belongs,
And turns and drawls: "Well, what of it?
My grandmother, Yesterday, is gone.
What of it? Let the dead be dead."

II

The doors were cedar
And the panels strips of gold;
And the girls were golden girls,
And the panels read and the girls chanted:
"We are the greatest city,
the greatest nation;
nothing like us ever was."
The doors are twisted on broken hinges.
Sheets of rain swish through on the wind

where the golden girls ran and the panels read:
"We are the greatest city,
the greatest nation;
nothing like us ever was."

III

It has happened before.
Strong men put up a city and got
a nation together,
And paid singers to sing and women
to warble: "We are the greatest city,
the greatest nation;
nothing like us ever was."

And while the singers sang,
And the strong men listened
And paid the singers well
And felt good about it all,
there were rats and lizards who listened . . .
and the only listeners left now . . .
are . . . the rats . . . and the lizards.

And there are black crows
Crying, "Caw, caw,"
Bringing mud and sticks,
Building a nest
Over the words carved
On the doors where the panels were cedar
And the strips on the panels were gold,
And the golden girls came singing:
"We are the greatest city,
the greatest nation:
nothing like us ever was."

The only singers now are crows crying, "Caw, caw";
And the sheets of rain whine in the wind and doorways.
And the only listeners now are . . . the rats . . . and the lizards.

IV

The feet of the rats
Scribble on the door-sills;
The hieroglyphs of the rat footprints
Chatter the pedigrees of the rats,
And babble of the blood
And gabble of the breed
Of the grandfathers and the great-grandfathers
Of the rats.

And the wind shifts,
And the dust on the door-sill shifts,
And even the writing of the rat footprints
Tells us nothing, nothing at all
About the greatest city, the greatest nation,
Where the strong men listened
And the women warbled: "Nothing like us ever was."

SHERWOOD ANDERSON (1876-)

THE LAME ONE

At night when there are no lights my city is a man who arises from a bed to stare into darkness.

In the daytime my city is the son of a dreamer. He has become the companion of thieves and prostitutes. He has denied his father.

My city is a thin old man who lives in a rooming house in a dirty street. He wears false teeth that have become loose and make a sharp clicking noise when he eats. He cannot find himself a woman and indulges in self-abuse. He picks cigar ends out of the gutter.

My city lives in the roofs of houses, in the eaves. A woman came to my city and he threw her far down out of the eaves on a pile of stones. Nobody knew. Those who live in my city declare she fell.

There is an angry man whose wife is unfaithful. He is my city. My city is in his hair, in his eyes. When he breathes his breath is the breath of my city.

There are many cities standing in rows. There are cities that sleep, cities that stand in the mud of a swamp.
I have come here to my city.
I have walked with my city.
I have limped slowly forward at night with my city.

My city is very strange. It is tired and nervous. My city has become a woman whose mother is ill. She creeps in the hallway of a house and listens in the darkness at the door of a room.

I cannot tell what my city is like.
My city is a kiss from the feverish lips of many tired people.
My city is a murmur of voices coming out of a pit.

JAMES OPPENHEIM (1882-)

FOR RANDOLPH BOURNE

(Died December 22, 1918)

I

We wind wreaths of holly
For Randolph Bourne,
We hang bitter-sweet for remembrance;
We make a song of wind in pines . . .

Wind in pines
Is winter's song, anthem of death,
And winter's child
Is gathered in the green hemlock arms
And sung to rest . . .

Sung to rest . . .
Waif of the storm
And world-bruised wanderer . . .
Sung to rest . . .

Sung to rest in our living hearts,
We receive him,
Winding our wreaths of holly
For Randolph Bourne.

II

Winter lasts long
And Death is our midnight sun
Rayless and red . . .
Peoples are dying, and the world
Crumbles greyly . . .

Autumn of civilization
Gorgeous with fruit
Dissolves in storm . . .

And we,
Our dead about us,
Know the great darkening of the sun
And the frozen months,
Sounding our hemlock anthem,
Hanging our bitter-sweet . . .

We walk in ruined woods
And among graves:
Earth is a burying ground . . .
Nations go down, and dreams
And myths of peoples
And the forlorn hopes
Make one burial . . .

And we
Came from the darkness, never to see
A Shakespeare's England,
A Sophocles' Athens,
But to live in the world's latter days,
In the great Age of Death,
Sons of Doomsday . . .

He also came,
And walked this crooked world,
Its image.

III

In him the world's winter,
Ruined boughs and dishevelled cornfields,
And the hunchback rocks
Grey on the hills,
Passed down our streets. . . .
Passed and is gone; and for him and the dying world
Our dirge sounds . . .

IV

Yet suddenly the wind catches up with glory
Our anthem, and peals wild hope,
Blowing of scattered bugles . . .

And the wind cries: Look,
Pierce to the soul of the cripple
Where, immortal,
The spirit of youth goes on,
Which dies never, but shall be
The green and the garland of the Spring.

And the wind cries: Down
To the dissolution of the grave
The crippled body of the world must go
And die utterly,
That the seed may take April's rain
And bring Earth's blooming back.

V

Bitter-sweet, and a northwest wind
To sing his requiem,
Who was
Our Age,
And who becomes

An imperishable symbol of our ongoing,
For in himself
He rose above his body and came among us
Prophetic of the race,
The great hater
Of the dark human deformity
Which is our dying world,
The great lover
Of the spirit of youth
Which is our future's seed . . .

In forced blooming we saw
Glimpses of awaited Spring.

VI

And so, lifting our eyes, we hang
Bitter-sweet for remembrance
Of Randolph Bourne.

And winter's child
Is gathered in the green hemlock arms
And sung to rest . . .

Sung to rest in our living hearts,
We receive the rejected,
Weaving a wreath of triumph
For Randolph Bourne.

LOLA RIDGE

THE EDGE

I thought to die that night in the solitude
where they would never find me . . .
But there was time . . .
And I lay quietly on the drawn knees of the mountain,
staring into the abyss . . .
I do not know how long . . .

I could not count the hours, they ran so fast
Like little bare-foot urchins—shaking my hands away. . . .
But I remember
Somewhere water trickled like a thin severed vein . . .
And a wind came out of the grass,
Touching me gently, tentatively, like a paw.

As the night grew
The gray cloud that had covered the sky like sackcloth
Fell in ashen folds about the hills,
Like hooded Virgins, pulling their cloaks about them . . .
There must have been a spent moon,
For the Tall One's veil held a shimmer of silver . . .
Dawn
Lay like a waxen hand upon the world,
And folded hills
Broke into a sudden wonder of peaks, stemming clear and cold,
Till the Tall One bloomed like a lily,
Flecked with sun,
Fine as a golden pollen—
It seemed a wind might blow it from the snow.

I smelled the raw sweet essences of things,
And heard spiders in the leaves
And ticking of little feet,
As tiny creatures came out of their doors
To see God pouring light into his star . . .

. . . It seemed life held
No future and no past but this . . .

And I too got up stiffly from the earth,
And held my heart up like a cup . . .

REVEILLE

Come forth, you workers!
Let the fires go cold—
Let the iron spill out, out of the troughs—

Let the iron run wild
Like a red bramble on the floors—
Leave the mill and the foundry and the mine
And the shrapnel lying on the wharves—
Leave the desk and the shuttle and the loom—
Come,
With your ashen lives,
Your lives like dust in your hands.

I call upon you, workers.
It is not yet light
But I beat upon your doors.
You say you await the Dawn
But I say you are the Dawn.
Come, in your irresistible unspent force
And make new light upon the mountains.

You have turned deaf ears to others—
Me you shall hear.
Out of the mouths of turbines,
Out of the turgid throats of engines,
Over the whistling steam,
You shall hear me shrilly piping.
Your mills I shall enter like the wind,
And blow upon your hearts,
Kindling the slow fire.

They think they have tamed you, workers—
Beaten you to a tool
To scoop up hot honor
Till it be cool—
But out of the passion of the red frontiers
A great flower trembles and burns and glows
And each of its petals is a people.

Come forth, you workers—
Clinging to your stable
And your wisp of warm straw—
Let the fires grow cold,

Let the iron spill out of the troughs,
Let the iron run wild
Like a red bramble on the floors. . . .

As our forefathers stood on the prairies
So let us stand in a ring,
Let us tear up their prisons like grass
And beat them to barricades—
Let us meet the fire of their guns
With a greater fire,
Till the birds shall fly to the mountains
For one safe bough.

SNOW-DANCE FOR THE DEAD

Dance, little children, it is holy twilight . . .
have you hung paper flowers about the necks of the ikons?
dance soft . . . but very gaily . . . on tiptoes like the snow. . .
spread your little pinafores
and curtsy as the snow does,
the snow that bends this way and that
in silent salutation . . .
do not wait to warm your hands about the fires.
Do not mind the rough licking of the wind.
Dance forth into the shaggy night that shakes itself upon you.

Dance beneath the Kremlin towers—golden in the royal purple of the sky—
but not there where the light is strongest . . .
bright hair is dazzling in the light . . .
dance in the dim violet places
where the snow throws out a faint lustre
like the lustre of dead faces . . .
snow downier than wild geese feathers . . .
enough filling for five hundred pillows
in the long deep trench of the dead.

Bend, little children
to the rhythm of the snow
that undulates this way and that
in silver spirals.
Cup your hands like tiny chalices . . .
let the flakes fill up the rosy
hollows of your palms
and light upon your hair—
like kisses that cling softly
a moment and let go . . .
like many, many kisses falling all together . . .
quick, cool kisses.

ALICE CORBIN

SAND PAINTINGS

The dawn breeze
Loosens the leaves
Of the trees,
The wide sky quivers
With awakened birds.

Two blue runners
Come from the east,
One has a scarf of silver,
One flings pine-boughs
Across the sky.

Noon-day stretched
In gigantic slumber—
Red copper cliffs
Rigid in sunlight.

An old man stoops
For a forgotten faggot,
Forehead of bronze
Between white locks
Bound with a rag of scarlet.

Where one door stands open,
The female moon
Beckons to darkness
And disappears.

CONSTANCE LINDSAY SKINNER

SONG OF BASKET-WEAVING

O Cedar-tree, Cedar, my Mother,
I sit at thy knee
Weaving my basket of grasses,
Weaving for my harvest of berries when the Ripe Days come.
Thy fingers gently touch my hair with fragrance,
Thy mouth drips a song, for the wind has kissed it.
(Love sings in thy mouth!)
The soil listens and answers;
I feel a stirring beneath me and hear buds opening,
The river chants thy song, and the clouds dance to it.
Tonight the stars will float upon thy singing breath,
Gleaming like slanting flocks above the sea.
All the Earth sings: and its voices are one song!

I alone am silent: I alone, a maid waiting him, the Fate,
The Stirring One, the Planter of the Harvest,
The Basket-Filler.
Cedar, Cedar-tree, Mother!
See how beautiful, how liberal, is my basket,
How tightly woven for the waters of love,
How soft for the treading of children's feet,
How strong to bear them up!
Cedar, Cedar-tree, Mother, remember me—
Ere the Sunset and the Drooping Leaf!

ARTURO GIOVANNITTI (1884-)

THE WALKER

I hear footsteps over my head all night,
They come and they go. Again they come and they go all night.

They come one eternity in four paces and they go one eternity in four paces, and between the coming and the going there is Silence and the Night and the Infinite.

For infinite are the nine feet of a prison cell, and endless is the march of him who walks between the yellow brick wall and the red iron gate, thinking things that cannot be chained and cannot be locked, but that wander far away in the sunlit world, each in a wild pilgrimage after a destined goal.

. . . . . .

Throughout the restless night I hear the footsteps over my head.

Who walks? I know not. It is the phantom of the jail, the sleepless brain, a man, the man, the Walker.

One-two-three-four: four paces and the wall.

One-two-three-four: four paces and the iron gate.

He has measured his space, he has measured it accurately, scrupulously, minutely, as the hangman measures the rope and the gravedigger the coffin—so many feet, so many inches, so many fractions of an inch for each of the four paces.

One-two-three-four: Each step sounds heavy and hollow over my head, and the echo of each step sounds hollow within my head as I count them in suspense and in dread that once, perhaps, in the endless walk, there may be five steps instead of four between the yellow brick wall and the red iron gate.

But he has measured the space so accurately, so scrupulously, so minutely that nothing breaks the grave rhythm of the slow, fantastic march.

. . . . . .

When all are asleep (and who knows but I when all sleep?) three things are still awake in the night: the Walker, my heart

and the old clock which has the soul of a fiend—for never, since a coarse hand with red hair on its fingers swung for the first time the pendulum in the jail, has the old clock tick-tocked a full hour of joy.

Yet the old clock which marks everything, and to everything tolls the death knell, the wise old clock that knows everything, does not know the number of the footsteps of the Walker, nor the throbs of my heart.

For not for the Walker, nor for my heart is there a second, a minute, an hour or anything that is in the old clock—there is nothing but the night, the sleepless night, the watchful, wistful night, and footsteps that go, and footsteps that come and the wild, tumultuous beatings that trail after them forever.

. . . . . .

All the sounds of the living beings and inanimate things, and all the voices and all the noises of the night I have heard in my wistful vigil.

I have heard the moans of him who bewails a thing that is dead and the sighs of him who tries to smother a thing that will not die;

I have heard the stifled sobs of the one who weeps with his head under the coarse blanket, and the whisperings of the one who prays with his forehead on the hard, cold stone of the floor;

I have heard him who laughs the shrill, sinister laugh of folly at the horror rampant on the yellow wall and at the red eyes of the nightmare glaring through the iron bars;

I have heard in the sudden icy silence him who coughs a dry, ringing cough, and wished madly that his throat would not rattle so and that he would not spit on the floor, for no sound was more atrocious than that of his sputum upon the floor;

I have heard him who swears fearsome oaths which I listen to in reverence and awe, for they are holier than the virgin's prayer;

And I have heard, most terrible of all, the silence of two hundred brains all possessed by one single, relentless, unforgiving, desperate thought.

All this have I heard in the watchful night,

And the murmur of the wind beyond the walls,
And the tolls of a distant bell,
And the woeful dirge of the rain,
And the remotest echoes of the sorrowful city,
And the terrible beatings, wild beatings, mad beatings of the One Heart which is nearest to my heart.
All this have I heard in the still night;
But nothing is louder, harder, drearier, mightier, more awful than the footsteps I hear over my head all night.

. . . . . .

Yet fearsome and terrible are all the footsteps of men upon the earth, for they either descend or climb.

They descend from little mounds and high peaks and lofty altitudes, through wide roads and narrow paths, down noble marble stairs and creaky stairs of wood—and some go down to the cellar, and some to the grave, and some down to the pits of shame and infamy, and still some to the glory of an unfathomable abyss where there is nothing but the staring white, stony eyeballs of Destiny.

And again other footsteps climb. They climb to life and to love, to fame, to power, to vanity, to truth, to glory and to the scaffold—to everything but Freedom and the Ideal.

And they all climb the same roads and the same stairs others go down; for never, since man began to think how to overcome and overpass man, have other roads and other stairs been found.

They descend and they climb, the fearful footsteps of men, and some limp, some drag, some speed, some trot, some run—they are quiet, slow, noisy, brisk, quick, feverish, mad, and most awful is their cadence to the ears of the one who stands still.

But of all the footsteps of men that either descend or climb, no footsteps are so fearsome and terrible as those that go straight on the dead level of a prison floor, from a yellow stone wall to a red iron gate.

. . . . . .

All through the night he walks and he thinks. Is it more frightful because he walks and his footsteps sound hollow over my head, or because he thinks and speaks not his thoughts?

But does he think? Why should he think? Do I think? I only hear the footsteps and count them. Four steps and the wall. Four steps and the gate. But beyond? Beyond? Where goes he beyond the gate and the wall?

He goes not beyond. His thought breaks there on the iron gate. Perhaps it breaks like a wave of rage, perhaps like a sudden flow of hope, but it always returns to beat the wall like a billow of helplessness and despair.

He walks to and fro within the narrow whirlpit of this ever storming and furious thought. Only one thought—constant, fixed, immovable, sinister, without power and without voice.

A thought of madness, frenzy, agony and despair, a hell-brewed thought, for it is a natural thought. All things natural are things impossible while there are jails in the world—bread, work, happiness, peace, love.

But he thinks not of this. As he walks he thinks of the most superhuman, the most unattainable, the most impossible thing in the world:

He thinks of a small brass key that turns just half around and throws open the red iron gate.

. . . . . .

That is all the Walker thinks, as he walks throughout the night.

And that is what two hundred minds drowned in the darkness and the silence of the night think, and that is also what I think.

Wonderful is the supreme wisdom of the jail that makes all think the same thought. Marvelous is the providence of the law that equalizes all, even in mind and sentiment. Fallen is the last barrier of privilege, the aristocracy of the intellect. The democracy of reason has leveled all the two hundred minds to the common surface of the same thought.

I, who have never killed, think like a murderer;

I, who have never stolen, reason like a thief;

I think, reason, wish, hope, doubt, wait like the hired assassin, the embezzler, the forger, the counterfeiter, the incestuous, the raper, the drunkard, the prostitute, the pimp, I, I who used to

think of love and life and flowers and song and beauty and the ideal.

A little key, a little key as little as my little finger, a little key of shining brass.

All my ideas, my thoughts, my dreams are congealed in a little key of shiny brass.

All my brain, all my soul, all the suddenly surging latent powers of my deepest life are in the pocket of a white-haired man dressed in blue.

He is great, powerful, formidable, the man with the white hair, for he has in his pocket the mighty talisman which makes one man cry, and one man pray, and one laugh, and one cough, and one walk, and all keep awake and listen and think the same maddening thought.

Greater than all men is the man with the white hair and the small brass key, for no other man in the world could compel two hundred men to think for so long the same thought. Surely when the light breaks I will write a hymn unto him which shall hail him greater than Mohammed and Arbues and Torquemada and Mesmer, and all the other masters of other men's thoughts. I shall call him Almighty, for he holds everything of all and of me in a little brass key in his pocket.

Everything of me he holds but the branding iron of contempt and the claymore of hatred for the monstrous cabala that can make the apostle and the murderer, the poet and the procurer, think of the same gate, the same key and the same exit on the different sunlit highways of life.

. . . . . .

My brother, do not walk any more.

It is wrong to walk on a grave. It is a sacrilege to walk four steps from the headstone to the foot and four steps from the foot to the headstone.

If you stop walking, my brother, no longer will this be a grave, for you will give me back my mind that is chained to your feet and the right to think my own thoughts.

I implore you, my brother, for I am weary of the long vigil, weary of counting your steps, and heavy with sleep.

Stop, rest, sleep, my brother, for the dawn is well nigh and it is not the key alone that can throw open the gate.

EZRA POUND (1885-)

PORTRAIT D'UNE FEMME

Your mind and you are our Sargasso Sea,
London has swept about you this score years
And bright ships left you this or that in fee:
Ideas, old gossip, oddments of all things,
Strange spars of knowledge and dimmed wares of price.
Great minds have sought you—lacking someone else.
You have been second always. Tragical?
No. You preferred it to the usual thing:
One dull man, dulling and uxorious,
One average mind—with one thought less, each year.
Oh, you are patient, I have seen you sit
Hours, where something might have floated up.
And now you pay one. Yes, you richly pay.
You are a person of some interest, one comes to you
And takes strange gain away:
Trophies fished up; some curious suggestion;
Fact that leads nowhere; and a tale or two,
Pregnant with mandrakes, or with something else
That might prove useful and yet never proves,
That never fits a corner or shows use,
Or finds its hour upon the loom of days:
The tarnished, gaudy, wonderful old work;
Idols and ambergris and rare inlays,
These are your riches, your great store; and yet
For all this sea-hoard of deciduous things,
Strange woods half sodden, and new brighter stuff:
In the slow float of differing light and deep,
No! there is nothing! In the whole and all,
Nothing that's quite your own.
Yet this is you.

DANCE FIGURE

(For the Marriage in Cana of Galilee)

Dark eyed,
O woman of my dreams,
Ivory sandaled,
There is none like thee among the dancers,
None with swift feet.

I have not found thee in the tents,
In the broken darkness,
I have not found thee at the well-head
Among the women with pitchers.

Thine arms are as a young sapling under the bark;
Thy face as a river with lights.

White as an almond are thy shoulders;
As new almonds stripped from the husk.
They guard thee not with eunuchs;
Not with bars of copper.

Gilt turquoise and silver are in the place of thy rest,
A brown robe, with threads of gold woven in patterns, hast thou gathered about thee,
O Nathat-Ikanaie, "Tree-at-the-river."

As a rillet among the sedge are thy hands upon me;
Thy fingers a frosted stream.

Thy maidens are white like pebbles;
Their music about thee!
There is none like thee among the dancers;
None with swift feet.

FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS

Come, my songs, let us express our baser passions,
Let us express our envy of the man with a steady job and no
worry about the future.
You are very idle, my songs.
I fear you will come to a bad end.
You stand about in the streets,
You loiter at the corners and bus-stops,
You do next to nothing at all.

You do not even express our inner nobilities,
You will come to a very bad end.

And I?
I have gone half cracked,
I have talked to you so much that
I almost see you about me,
Insolent little beasts, shameless, devoid of clothing!

But you, newest song of the lot,
You are not old enough to have done much mischief,
I will get you a green coat out of China
With dragons worked upon it,
I will get you the scarlet silk trousers
From the statue of the infant Christ in Santa Maria Novella,
Lest they say we are lacking in taste,
Or that there is no caste in this family.

THE RIVER-MERCHANT'S WIFE: A LETTER

While my hair was still cut straight across my forehead
I played about the front gate, pulling flowers.
You came by on bamboo stilts, playing horse,
You walked about my seat, playing with blue plums.
And we went on living in the village of Chokan:
Two small people, without dislike or suspicion.

At fourteen I married My Lord you.
I never laughed, being bashful.
Lowering my head, I looked at the wall.
Called to, a thousand times, I never looked back.

At fifteen I stopped scowling,
I desired my dust to be mingled with yours
Forever and forever and forever.
Why should I climb the look out?

At sixteen you departed,
You went into far Ku-to-yen, by the river of swirling eddies,
And you have been gone five months.
The monkeys make sorrowful noise overhead.
You dragged your feet when you went out.
By the gate now, the moss is grown, the different mosses,
Too deep to clear them away!
The leaves fall early this autumn, in wind.
The paired butterflies are already yellow with August
Over the grass in the West garden;
They hurt me. I grow older.
If you are coming down through the narrows of the river Kiang,
Please let me know beforehand,
And I will come out to meet you
As far as Cho-fu-Sa.

By Rihaku.

THE SEAFARER

(*From the Anglo-Saxon*)

May I for my own self song's truth reckon,
Journey's jargon, how I in harsh days
Hardship endured oft.
Bitter breast-cares have I abided,
Known on my keel many a care's hold,
And dire sea-urge, and there I oft spent
Narrow nightwatch nigh the ship's head
While she tossed close to cliffs. Coldly afflicted,

My feet were by frost benumbed.
Chill its chains are; chafing sighs
Hew my heart round and hunger begot
Mere-weary mood. Lest man know not
That he on dry land loveliest liveth,
List how I, care-wretched, on ice-cold sea,
Weathered the winter, wretched outcast
Deprived of my kinsmen;
Hung with hard ice-flakes, where hail-scur flew,
There I heard naught save the harsh sea
And ice-cold wave, at whiles the swan cries,
Did for my games the gannet's clamour,
Sea-fowls' loudness was for me laughter,
The mews' singing all my mead-drink.
Storms, on the stone-cliffs beaten, fell on the stern
In icy feathers; full oft the eagle screamed
With spray on his pinion.
Not any protector
May make merry man faring needy.
This he little believes, who aye in winsome life
Abides 'mid burghers some heavy business,
Wealthy and wine-flushed, how I weary oft
Must bide above brine.
Neareth nightshade, snoweth from north,
Frost froze the land, hail fell on earth then,
Corn of the coldest. Nathless there knocketh now
The heart's thought that I on high streams
The salt-wavy tumult traverse alone.
Moaneth alway my mind's lust
That I fare forth, that I afar hence
Seek out a foreign fastness.
For this there's no mood-lofty man over earth's midst,
Not though he be given his good, but will have in his youth
greed;
Nor his deed to the daring, nor his king to the faithful
But shall have his sorrow for sea-fare
Whatever his lord will.

He hath not heart for harping, nor in ring-having
Nor winsomeness to wife, nor world's delight
Nor any whit else save the wave's slash,
Yet longing comes upon him to fare forth on the water.
Bosque taketh blossom, cometh beauty of berries,
Fields to fairness, land fares brisker,
All this admonisheth man eager of mood,
The heart turns to travel so that he then thinks
On flood-ways to be far departing.
Cuckoo calleth with gloomy crying,
He singeth summerward, bodeth sorrow,
The bitter heart's blood. Burgher knows not—
He the prosperous man—what some perform
Where wandering them widest draweth.
So that but now my heart burst from my breastlock,
My mood 'mid the mere-flood,
Over the whale's acre, would wander wide.
On earth's shelter cometh oft to me,
Eager and ready, the crying lone-flyer,
Whets for the whale-path the heart irresistibly,
O'er tracks of ocean; seeing that anyhow
My lord deems to me this dead life
On loan and on land, I believe not
That any earth-weal eternal standeth
Save there be somewhat calamitous
That, ere a man's tide go, turn it to twain.
Disease or oldness or sword-hate
Beats out the breath from doom-gripped body.
And for this, every earl whatever, for those speaking after—
Laud of the living, boasteth some last word,
That he will work ere he pass onward,
Frame on the fair earth 'gainst foes his malice,
Daring ado, . . .
So that all men shall honour him after
And his laud beyond them remain 'mid the English,
Aye, for ever, a lasting life's-blast,
Delight 'mid the doughty.

Days little durable,
And all arrogance of earthen riches,
There come now no kings nor Cæsars
Nor gold-giving lords like those gone.
Howe'er in earth most magnified,
Whoe'er lived in life most lordliest,
Drear all this excellence, delights undurable!
Waneth the watch, but the world holdeth.
Tomb hideth trouble. The blade is layed low.
Earthly glory ageth and seareth.
No man at all going the earth's gait,
But age fares against him, his face paleth,
Grey-haired he groaneth, knows gone companions,
Lordly men, are to earth o'ergiven,
Nor may he then the flesh-cover, whose life ceaseth,
Nor eat the sweet nor feel the sorry,
Nor stir hand nor think in mid heart,
And though he strew the grave with gold,
His born brothers, their buried bodies
Be an unlikely treasure hoard.

H. D. (1886-)

THE HELMSMAN

O be swift—
we have always known you wanted us.

We fled inland with our flocks,
we pastured them in hollows,
cut off from the wind
and the salt track of the marsh.

We worshipped inland—
we stepped past wood-flowers,
we forgot your tang,
we brushed wood-grass.

We wandered from pine-hills
through oak and scrub-oak tangles,
we broke hyssop and bramble,
we caught flower and new bramble-fruit
in our hair: we laughed
as each branch whipped back,
we tore our feet in half buried rocks
and knotted roots and acorn-cups.

We forgot—we worshipped,
we parted green from green,
we sought further thickets,
we dipped our ankles
through leaf-mould and earth,
and wood and wood-bank enchanted us—

and the feel of the clefts in the bark,
and the slope between tree and tree—
and a slender path strung field to field
and wood to wood
and hill to hill
and the forest after it.

We forgot—for a moment
tree-resin, tree-bark,
sweat of a torn branch
were sweet to the taste.

We were enchanted with the fields,
the tufts of coarse grass
in the shorter grass—
we loved all this.

But now, our boat climbs—hesitates—drops—
climbs—hesitates—crawls back—
climbs—hesitates—
O be swift—
we have always known you wanted us.

H. D.

THE SHRINE

(*"She Watches Over the Sea"*)

I

Are your rocks shelter for ships—
have you sent galleys from your beach,
are you graded—a safe crescent—
where the tide lifts them back to port—
are you full and sweet,
tempting the quiet
to depart in their trading ships?

Nay, you are great, fierce, evil—
you are the land-blight—
you have tempted men
but they perished on your cliffs.

Your lights are but dank shoals,
slate and pebble and wet shells
and seaweed fastened to the rocks.

It was evil—evil
when they found you,
when the quiet men looked at you—
they sought a headland
shaded with ledge of cliff
from the wind-blast.

But you—you are unsheltered,
cut with the weight of wind—
you shudder when it strikes,
then lift, swelled with the blast—
you sink as the tide sinks,
you shrill under hail, and sound
thunder when thunder sounds.

You are useless—
when the tides swirl
your boulders cut and wreck
the staggering ships.

II

You are useless,
O grave, O beautiful,
the landsmen tell it—I have heard—
you are useless.
And the wind sounds with this
and the sea
where rollers shot with blue
cut under deeper blue.
O but stay tender, enchanted
where wave-lengths cut you
apart from all the rest—
for we have found you,
we watch the splendour of you,
we thread throat on throat of freesia
for your shelf.

You are not forgot,
O plunder of lilies,
honey is not more sweet
than the salt stretch of your beach.

III

Stay—stay—
but terror has caught us now,
we passed the men in ships,
we dared deeper than the fisher-folk
and you strike us with terror
O bright shaft.

Flame passes under us
and sparks that unknot the flesh,
sorrow, splitting bone from bone,
splendour athwart our eyes

and rifts in the splendour,
sparks and scattered light.
Many warned of this,
men said:
there are wrecks on the fore-beach,
wind will beat your ship,
there is no shelter in that headland,
it is useless waste, that edge,
that front of rock—
sea-gulls clang beyond the breakers,
none venture to that spot.

IV

But hail—
as the tide slackens,
as the wind beats out,
we hail this shore—
we sing to you,
spirit between the headlands
and the further rocks.

Though oak-beams split,
though boats and sea-men flounder,
and the strait grind sand with sand
and cut boulders to sand and drift—

your eyes have pardoned our faults,
your hands have touched us—
you have leaned forward a little
and the waves can never thrust us back
from the splendour of your ragged coast.

PYGMALION

I

Shall I let myself be caught
in my own light?
shall I let myself be broken

in my own heat?
or shall I cleft the rock as of old
and break my own fire
with its surface?

does this fire thwart me
and my craft,
or does my work cloud this light?
which is the god,
which is the stone
the god takes for his use?

II

Which am I,
the stone or the power
that lifts the rock from the earth?
am I the master of this fire,
is this fire my own strength?

am I master of this
swirl upon swirl of light?
have I made it as in old times
I made the gods from the rock?

have I made this fire from myself?
or is this arrogance?
is this fire a god
that seeks me in the dark?

III

I made image upon image for my use,
I made image upon image, for the grace
of Pallas was my flint
and my help was Hephæstus.

I made god upon god
step from the cold rock,
I made the gods less than men
for I was a man and they my work;

and now what is it that has come to pass?
for fire has shaken my hand,
my strivings are dust.

IV

Now what is it that has come to pass?
over my head, fire stands,
my marbles are alert:

each of the gods, perfect,
cries out from a perfect throat:
you are useless,
no marble can bind me,
no stone suggest.

V

They have melted into the light
and I am desolate;
they have melted;
each from his plinth,
each one departs;

they have gone;
what agony can express my grief?

each from his marble base
has stepped into the light
and my work is for naught.

VI

Now am I the power
that has made this fire
as of old I made the gods
start from the rocks?
am I the god?
or does this fire carve me
for its use?

AT ITHICA

Over and back,
the long waves crawl
and track the sand with foam;
night darkens and the sea
takes on that desperate tone
of dark that wives put on
when all their love is done.

Over and back,
the tangled thread falls slack,
over and up and on;
over and all is sewn;
now while I bind the end,
I wish some fiery friend
would sweep impetuously
these fingers from the loom.

My weary thoughts
play traitor to my soul,
just as the toil is over;
swift while the woof is whole,
turn now my spirit, swift,
and tear the pattern there,
the flowers so deftly wrought,
the border of sea-blue,
the sea-blue coast of home.

The web was over-fair,
that web of pictures there,
enchantments that I thought
he had, that I had lost;
weaving his happiness
within the stitching frame,
I thought my work was done,

H. D.

I prayed that only one
of those that I had spurned,
might stoop and conquer this
long waiting with a kiss.

But each time that I see
my work so beautifully
inwoven and would keep
the picture and the whole,
Athene steels my soul,
slanting across my brain,
I see as shafts of rain
his chariot and his shafts,
I see the arrows fall,
I see my lord who moves
like Hector, lord of love,
I see him matched with fair
bright rivals and I see
those lesser rivals flee.

JOHN GOULD FLETCHER (1886-)

IRRADIATIONS

I

Over the roof-tops race the shadows of clouds:
Like horses the shadows of clouds charge down the street.

Whirlpools of purple and gold,
Winds from the mountains of cinnabar,
Lacquered mandarin moments, palanquins swaying and balancing
Amid the vermilion pavilions, against the jade balustrades;
Glint of the glittering winds of dragon-flies in the light;
Silver filaments, golden flakes settling downwards;
Rippling, quivering flutters; repulse and surrender,
The sun broidered upon the rain,
The rain rustling with the sun.

Over the roof-tops race the shadows of clouds:
Like horses the shadows of clouds charge down the street.

II

O seeded grass, you army of little men
Crawling up the long slope with quivering quick blades of steel:
You who storm millions of graves, tiny green tentacles of Earth,
Interlace yourselves tightly over my heart
And do not let me go:
For I would lie here for ever and watch with one eye
The pilgrimaging ants in your dull savage jungles,
While with the other I see the stiff lines of the slope
Break in mid-air, a wave surprisingly arrested;
And above them, wavering, dancing, bodiless, colorless, unreal,
The long thin lazy fingers of the heat.

III

Not noisily, but solemnly and pale,
In a meditative ecstasy, you entered life,
As performing some strange rite, to which you alone held the clue.
Child, life did not give rude strength to you;
From the beginning you would seem to have thrown away,
As something cold and cumbersome, that armor men use against death.
You would perhaps look on him face to face and so learn the secret
Whether that face wears oftenest a smile or no.
Strange, old and silent being, there is something
Infinitely vast in your intense tininess:
I think you could point out with a smile some curious star
Far off in the heavens, which no man has seen before.

IV

The morning is clean and blue, and the wind blows up the clouds:
Now my thoughts, gathered from afar,

Once again in their patched armor, with rusty plumes and
blunted swords,
Move out to war.

Smoking our morning pipes we shall ride two and two
Through the woods.
For our old cause keeps us together,
And our hatred is so precious not death or defeat can break it.

God willing, we shall this day meet that old enemy
Who has given us so many a good beating.
Thank God, we have a cause worth fighting for,
And a cause worth losing, and a good song to sing!

THE BLUE SYMPHONY

I

The darkness rolls upward.
The thick darkness carries with it
Rain and a ravel of cloud.
The sun comes forth upon earth.

Palely the dawn
Leaves me facing timidly
Old gardens sunken:
And in the gardens is water.

Sombre wreck—autumnal leaves;
Shadowy roofs
In the blue mist,
And a willow-branch that is broken.

O old pagodas of my soul, how you glittered across green trees!

Blue and cool:
Blue, tremulously,
Blow faint puffs of smoke
Across sombre pools.

The damp green smell of rotted wood;
And a heron that cries from out the water.

II

Through the upland meadows
I go alone.
For I dreamed of someone last night
Who is waiting for me.

Flower and blossom, tell me, do you know of her?

Have the rocks hidden her voice?
They are very blue and still.

Long upward road that is leading me,
Light-hearted I quit you,
For the long loose ripples of the meadow-grass
Invite me to dance upon them.

Quivering grass,
Daintily poised
For her foot's tripping.

O blown clouds, could I only race up like you!
Oh, the last slopes that are sun-drenched and steep!
Look, the sky!
Across black valleys
Rise blue-white aloft
Jagged unwrinkled mountains, ranges of death.

Solitude. Silence.

III

One chuckles by the brook for me:
One rages under the stone.
One makes a spout of his mouth,
One whispers—one is gone.

One over there on the water
Spreads cold ripples
For me
Enticingly.

The vast dark trees
Flow like blue veils
Of tears
Into the water.

Sour sprites,
Moaning and chuckling,
What have you hidden from me?

"In the palace of the blue stone she lies forever
Bound hand and foot."

Was it the wind
That rattled the reeds together?
Dry reeds,
A faint shiver in the grasses.

IV

On the left hand there is a temple:
And a palace on the right-hand side.

Foot-passengers in scarlet
Pass over the glittering tide.

Under the bridge
The old river flows
Low and monotonous
Day after day.

I have heard and have seen
All the news that has been:
Autumn's gold and Spring's green!

Now in my palace
I see foot-passengers
Crossing the river,
Pilgrims of autumn
In the afternoons.

Lotus pools;
Petals in the water:
These are my dreams.

For me silks are outspread.
I take my ease, unthinking.

V

And now the lowest pine-branch
Is drawn across the disk of the sun.
Old friends who will forget me soon,
I must go on
Towards those blue death-mountains
I have forgot so long.

In the march grasses
There lies forever
My last treasure,
With the hopes of my heart.

The ice is glazing over;
Torn lanterns flutter,
On the leaves is snow.

In the frosty evening
Toll the old bell for me
Once, in the sleepy temple.

Perhaps my soul will hear.

Afterglow:
Before the stars peep
I shall creep out into darkness.

TO A SURVIVOR OF THE FLOOD

Set high your head above the nameless flood,
And brood upon its empty waters; lean
Your forehead back and stare aloof, serene,
At night's betrayal; now let the stagnant blood

Beat in your smouldering heart which sunken far
Beneath the surface, hammers weak and cold
Against your buried ribs, long washed and rolled
By waters of Wormwood, that old fallen star.

Night brings no rainbows—you within the night,
Last Titan standing on wrecked peaks upright,
Olympus piled on Sinai, can you find
Aught but the moonless dark to match your mind?
Who knows, who knows? When all the gods have gone,
And man's despair has riven apart the sun,
And you, vain atom, are grown Everyman,
Is this the beginning or the end you scan?
Will you speed forth on some chance lava flow
Torn from a ruined sun you do not know,
Towards a state no human tongue can tell
After wrecked heaven has fallen below dead hell?
Or will you sink down sluggishly within,
Dropping below the waters cheek and chin,
And last of all, now nevermore to rise,
The huge unspeaking orbits of your eyes?
Will you rest rotting darkly in that sea,
To an eternity of vacancy?

TO COLUMBUS

I

These were the seas that you knew, and these were the ways that you followed
From your Genoa of the dark narrow streets, where the sails flapped against the fronts of the houses;
The wave of the Mediterranean, evenly spaced, foamless wave ever advancing and never returning,
This was the power that lured you on, and perhaps also the tale of some yellow-shawled Arab sailor
Whose dark brown sunken eyes burned strangely at you, kindling with vivid fire

Above his scarred and sunken cheeks, weathered by tropic tempest.
He spoke to you of Cathay and the way thither, from the ports that open on the red desert,
Of Travancore and of Ind, of Taprobane and of the valley of spices.
And your eyes were taken away from him as he spoke, they went seeking the far-off horizon,
Taut as the string of a violoncello played upon by the light; above it opal-fired clouds were gathered
Piled high like the mountain-tops of dark islands waiting for an eternal conquest.
This was the land that you loved, that you left, that you did not see again:
The land of the grey-green olives climbing the hills in high terraces, of the black cypresses following in procession like monks in cowls, of the umbrella pines soaring to the tops of the mountains.
You left it for a harsher land, for Spain of the Kings, sunburnt, grey, desolate, a land where for seven hundred years the ice-flame of the Cross had struggled with the soft moony splendours of Islam.
You left it for the opening to the unknown ocean where pink Jebel el Tarif glares at Africa opposite, couchant and yellow and sullen,
You left it for the purple-green Gulf Stream breaking about you in foam, for naked brown Indian girls strolling amid palms, for solitude, glory, and silence.

II

When you had abandoned the land's last horizon,
When you floated to tropic waters,
When the wave took you not knowing whither you would go, when the wind in your white sails was silent,
And you abode in the midst of the seas
Like a swimming flash floating at the centre of a great shell dyed with purple-blue colours,

Then to you pacing the tiny deck of your caravel, each distant
cloud grew a portent,
Each floating weed promised an island,
Each shifting sea-breeze came laden with perfume of flowers
and spices,
And the sea-turtles swimming about you through the blue
depths below raised ever your hopes for a landfall.

The birds flew hither and thither,
The yards on the tall masts were righted,
The breeze failed and slackened, the sea ran like a river, the
wind was adverse,
The men greeted you with scowls or with smiles, there was
thunder in the air every morning,
Each day brought a new world closer.

You sailed onward from death to life and back to death again
a hundred times,
You trembled at the oncoming of darkness,
The sun shutting his gates of orange and rose before you with
a clang as of breaking metal,
The men crossing themselves as the lantern was hoisted to the
maintop,
And each sunrise found you pacing the deck all alone with pale
face and sweat-darkened hair.

It was pride, pride of faith, that still there upbore you,
Pride in your Genoa the superb, pride of a steel blade tempered
in Spanish fires of conquest;
You tore up the tottering cross and you bore it,
You the new Christopher, over the streams of the ocean,
In your pride exulting at the sufferings of the dying man hang-
ing upon it,
For in truth you were bearing the black sins of Europe to a land
where no sin had yet been.

III

We who have struggled upon a longer, more desperate voyage,
Who have battled with tempests of the inner soul and have felt
our planks give way to the waves that attacked them,
Who have lifted up hands in mad mutiny against our own
brothers, who have covered the earth with dark slaughter,
Who have slain many a blossoming hope, and poisoned the spring
air with horror,
Who have fashioned ruins to take the place of men;
We yet have struggled onward and on
Dreaming of a hope beyond human hope, of a knowledge be-
yond human knowledge,
Of a desire beyond human desire,
When the temptation of the serpent shall be no more bitter,
nor the deed of shame done in the darkness,
In the days when man shall hold the sun like a naked child
close in his arms, and woman stand laughing beside him;
When awakening in the morning they shall be made one, nor
conceal with cold darkness and horror
The desire of their souls upsurging through dust, desire to attain
the last heaven;
Where there shall be naught that we shrink from, naught that
we dare not courageously and faithfully achieve here,
Twain made one in ourselves, and through ourselves outward
for others;
When the desire and despair of mankind shall be crowned with
immortal white glory,
We know that on that great day to come you will rise again as
a red star beckoning us on.

New worlds yet unconquered waken each day within us,
Youth cannot fully conquer, nor old age fully conquer,
We shall abandon our works to the passing of years, to the
waves' teeth and the winds' cry,
Setting forth with full sail for an ocean unseen, burning with
zeal to achieve it:

Youth is the season for planning and dreaming, for hoping and praying, for seeking:
Still to come is the season for achieving all that we have to achieve and for passing beyond.
We from the seas that you found, and the ways that you wandered,
From clamorous and sullen streets where the spirit is stifled and vanquished,
From cities of sham and of greed, from energies shattered and wasted,
From a flat barren shore where the wave in mad tides rushes up the grey land to devour it,
Come to the quiet deep bays that you lost, to the soft-swelling olive-grey hillsides,
Where the cross for five centuries longer has hung bearing its burden of sorrow,
And we bring with us the old seed ripened to a fruit, the proud will grown bitter and silent,
The suffering become a garment, and the glory grown a dark weapon;
Scarified through defeat we come hither and we stand before you now silent,
You who once guided us westward, here on this eastward shore will now look down and understand.

WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS
(1883-)

POSTLUDE

Now that I have cooled to you
Let there be gold of tarnished masonry,
Temples soothed by the sun to ruin,
That sleep utterly.
Give me hand for the dances,
Ripples at Philæ, in and out;
And lips, my Lesbian,
Wallflowers that once were flame.

Your hair is my Carthage
And my arms the bow,
And our words arrows
To shoot the stars
Who from that misty sea
Swarm to destroy us.

But you there beside me—
Oh, how shall I defy you,
Who wound me in the night
With breasts shining
Like Venus and like Mars?
The night that is shouting Jason
When the loud eaves rattle
As with waves above me
Blue at the prow of my desire.

RIGMAROLE

The veritable night
Of wires and stars

the moon is in
the oak tree's crotch

and sleepers in
the windows cough

athwart the round
and pointed leaves

and insects sting
while on the grass

the whitish moonlight
tearfully

assumes the attitudes
of afternoon—

But it is real
where peaches hang

recalling death's
long promised symphony

whose tuneful wood
and stringish undergrowth

are ghosts existing
without being

save to come with juice
and pulp to assuage

the hungers which
the night reveals

so that now at last
the truth's aglow

with devilish peace
forestalling day

which dawns tomorrow
with dreadful reds

the heart to predicate
with mists that loved

the ocean and the fields—
This moonlight

is the perfect
human touch.

FROM "A FOLDED SKYSCRAPER"

Hemmed in males—hemmedin males—hemmedin ***males***

The saloon is gone up the creek
with the black sand round its
mouth, it went floating like

a backhouse on the Mississippi in
flood time but it went up
the creek into Limbo from whence

only empty bottles ever return
And that's where George is
He's gone up stream, to ask 'em

to let him in at the hole
in the wall where the W.C.T.U.
sits knitting elastic stockings

for varicose veins. Poor George
he's got a job now as janitor
in Lincoln School but the saloon

is gone forever with pictures
of Sullivan and Kilrain on
the walls and Pop Anson holding

a bat. Poor George they've cut
out his pituitary gland and his
vas deferens is in the spittoon—

You can laugh at him without his
organs but that's the way with
a river when it wants to

drown you, it sucks you in and
you feel the old saloon sinking
under you and you say good-bye

just as George did, good-bye poetry
the black sand's got me, the old
days are over, there's no place

anymore for me to go now
except home.

THE WINDS

many winds, flowing edge to edge
their clear edges meeting—
as thought meets thought
in pity and contention
—the winds of this northern March

blow the bark from the trees
the soil from the fields
the hair from the heads of
girls, the shirts from the backs
of the men, roofs from the
church, the clouds from the sky
the fur from the faces of
wild animals, crusts
from scabby eyes, scales from
the mind and husbands from wives.

FLIGHT TO THE CITY

The Easter stars are shining
above lights that are flashing—
coronal of the black—
Nobody
to say it—
Nobody to say: pinholes
Thither I would carry her

among the lights—

Burst it asunder
break through to the fifty words
necessary—

a crown for her head with
castles upon it, skyscrapers
filled with nut-chocolates—

dovetame winds—
stars of tinsel

from the great end of a cornucopia
of glass.

ELSIE

The pure products of America
go crazy—
mountain folk from Kentucky

or the ribbed north end of
Jersey
with its isolate lakes and

valleys, its deaf-mutes, thieves
old names
and promiscuity between

devil-may-care men who have taken
to railroading
out of sheer lust of adventure—

and young slatterns, bathed
in filth
from Monday to Saturday

to be tricked out that night
with gauds
from imaginations which have no

peasant traditions to give them
character
but flutter and flaunt

sheer rags—succumbing without
emotion
save numbed terror

under some hedge of choke-cherry
or viburnum—
which they cannot express—

Unless it be that marriage
perhaps
with a dash of Indian blood

will throw up a girl so desolate
so hemmed round
with disease or murder

that she'll be rescued by an
agent—
reared by the state and

sent out at fifteen to work in
some hard pressed
house in the suburbs—

some doctor's family, some Elsie—
voluptuous water
expressing with broken

brain the truth about us—
her great
ungainly hips and flopping breasts

addressed to cheap
jewelry
and rich young men with fine eyes

as if the earth under our feet
were
an excrement of some sky

and we degraded prisoners
destined
to hunger until we eat filth

while the imagination strains
after deer
going by fields of goldenrod in

the stifling heat of September
Somehow
it seems to destroy us

It is only in isolate flecks that
something
is given off

No one
to witness
and adjust, no one to drive the car

ALFRED KREYMBORG (1883-)

UNDER GLASS

If I could catch that moth,
the fluttering, wayward thing
that beats about inside me all the day and half the night
(an insignificant net could certainly do it),
I'd stick him through the head
with a pin that's long and thin,
a pin that's long and strong enough to mount him under glass
(an insignificant pin could certainly do it);
I'd discover once for all
the color of his wings,
the nature of the crazy things that fooled me all these years:
purple, red or blue,
yellow, white or black,
or whether they're one and all of these and a shade or two besides
(an insignificant harmony or dissonance they could be);
I'd learn them once for all,
I'd know them, every vein,
so clear to all my neighbors,
so invisible—to me.

GEOMETRY

Never a mouse
chases ever a tail,
never a mouse ever sees
that always a cat
catches always a mouse,
cats being kittens
who once chased their tails:
Toss a pebble
into a stream,
never a circle
catches a circle;
shoot a dawn-ball
into the sky,
never a moonbeam
catches a sun;
drop the same thought
on the floor,
only a kitten
catches a tail,
the tail being straight,
the kitten a circle:
Yet never a mouse
chases ever a tail,
never a mouse ever sees
that always some death
catches always his mouse,
deaths being kittens
who once chased their tails.

DOROTHY

Her Eyes

Her eyes hold black whips—
dart of a whip

lashing, nay, flicking,
nay, merely caressing
the hide of a heart,
and a broncho tears through canyons—
walls reverberating,
sluggish streams
shaken to rapids and torrents,
tempest destroying
silence and solitude!
Her eyes throw black lariats,
one for his head,
one for his heels,
and the beast lies vanquished—
walls still,
streams still,
except for a tarn,
or is it a pool,
or is it a whirlpool
twitching with memory?

Her Hair

Her hair
is a tent
held down by two pegs—
ears, very likely—
where two gypsies—
eyes, dull folk call them—
read your soul away:
one promising something,
the other stealing it.
If the pegs would let go
and the tent
blow away, drop away,
like a wig or a nest—
maybe
you'd escape

paying coin
to gypsies—
maybe—

Her Hands

Blue veins
of morning glories
blue veins
of clouds
bring deep-toned silence
after a storm.
White horns
of morning glories
white flutes
of clouds—
sextettes hold silence and
cup it for aye.
Could I
blow morning glories
could I
lip clouds
I'd sound the silence
her hands bring to me.
Had I
the yester sun
had I
the morrow's—
brush them like cymbals,
I'd then sound the noise.

Her Body

Her body gleams
like an altar candle,
white in the dark,
and modulates

to voluptuous bronze,
bronze of a sea,
under the flame.

LESS LONELY

Four tiny folk,
hardly bigger than gnomes,
but as chipper as gnomes—
though their faces were pale,
their eyes pale blue,
their hair pale gold—
and their carriage grave,
their clothes
improvised remnants
of days that were dresses—
wooden clogs for shoes,
darned cord for stockings,
yellow twine for garters—
and under each grasshopper arm,
a load
and a load
and a load
and a load of books—
two ahead and two behind
or four abreast,
four tiny gnomes
on their way to school
or back from school—
trees nodding overhead,
lanes ambling underfoot,
and Italy rolling everywhere—
lazy heads,
sleepy veins,
dreamy voices
chanting in unison—
dieci per uno dieci

dieci per due venti
dieci per tre trenta—
carried an echo,
a dim echo,
a thin small voice,
a timid voice,
from the distances
over the mountains,
across the sea,
beyond the horizon,
behind the years—
ten times one are ten,
ten times two are twenty,
ten times three—
only I
was never quite able to go
so carelessly,
nor so musically—
and each of them
wore a halo,
or a necklace,
or a bracelet
of blue-bearded
violets—
while I
used to wear a cap,
a dizzy New York cap,
and the town on top of me,
houses on my head,
streets across my back,
down my arms and my legs—
moving along alone,
with crowded jostling things inside,
wondering, pondering
what was to come,
and whether to-morrow,
or the next day,

or possibly the day after,
or surely the day after that
would be lighter
and bluer
and easier—
and less lonely.

CREDO

Do fishes gleam with hope or flowers feel
The need of living still another life,
And drowsy snakes, when skins begin to peel,
Dream of a sky where there's an end to strife?
Which of the idols cause such heads to nod?
Whom do the insects ask for one more day?
Do all the toads that dread the coming sod
Hop with the hope their present lives will pay?

Or does Man kneel alone with his high fancies?
Why can't he rest awhile among his senses?
No sooner does the sun return, he dances
A gold and silver round of future tenses.
He who can make the most of transient skies,
It seems to me deserves the only prize.

RAIN INTERS MAGGIORE

It rains and then it rains and still it rains;
The town is lost in rivers, lakes and fogs;
Misery groans and mutters, execrates
The flying winds that bring the shrunken earth
Another wave of moisture fathoms deep,
The necessary moiety for seeds
To split their sides with drinking and emerge
As corpulent as cabbages or monks.

But who dares squeeze his head above the ground;
What man, inhabiting a mortal skin

And cramped, two-legged habits, has the skill,
Bravado and resistance to defy
An open window or a door, for clouds
To mystify, bewilder, madden, blind
With vertical, oblique, criss-crossing rain,
Until the head, no longer dodging, break?

The weary mountains glower at all the clouds
Winding long effeminate shawls and scarves
Of black and gray reiterated, round
Their stony foreheads, eyes and silent mouths;
As if the peaks were women and the world
Frail Puritans from London dreading nudes,
Unless the body be masked and hooded safe
As ladies of Madrid who shyly veil
Their eyes and move behind dark draperies.

The people hide in houses, huddled close,
And have no talk to talk about who have
No topic which they haven't had before—
Each window like the rest, each view a sea.
And who can find surprise inside a room
Worn stupidly monotonous and chill
With feet that know not where they go nor why,
Beating a rataplan upon a drum,
No matter where you beat it, sounds the same?

And who would venture forth in search of themes
To twine discussion round, when not a soul
Is on the road to tell you how it goes
Or doesn't go with him? And yet, suppose
You chanced to meet so bold a vagabond—
Like some exotic blossom in the dusk—
Would he turn idiotic, lift his chin
Out of his neck to tell you miracles
Of how the slopes are dancing, wild with fire:
Camelias and mimosas, stormily drunk
Lighting the night with red and white and gold?

The rain is steady now, a metronome;
No pause or syncopation dams the flood;
Conformity is king, the sky a slave
To humdrum tedium, men have christened God!
Go, put the kettle on the stove to boil
A pint of all this water from the soil,
And turn to China and a pinch of tea
To saturate our bleak monotony:
Italy's dead and dull, all Europe gray—
Take down that silken copy—Li Tai Po—
Open his drunken rivers; let them flow
And haul this junk, the Occident away!
Yes, light the lamp; let it provide the sun
That wars to finish hatreds have undone!

WALTER CONRAD ARENSBERG
(1878-)

VOYAGE À L'INFINI

The swan existing
Is like a song with an accompaniment
Imaginary.

Across the glassy lake,
Across the lake to the shadow of the willows,
It is accompanied by an image,
—As by Debussy's
"*Reflets dans l'eau.*"

The swan that is
Reflects
Upon the solitary water—breast to breast
With the duplicity:
"*The other one!*"

And breast to breast it is confused.
O visionary wedding! O stateliness of the procession!

It is accompanied by the image of itself
Alone.

At night
The lake is a wide silence
Without imagination.

CHRYSEIS

When came the priest thy father to recapture
Thee, O thou sad and glad Chryseis, won
And worn by Agamemnon and undone,
What of thy rape and thine unwilling rapture?

Didst thou remember, pure and simple daughter,
Seeing thy father with a golden treasure
Still fail to free thee from the deadly pleasure
And sail without thee home across the water?

Wert thou so lonely then that thou didst crave
Oh any touch to make thee less alone,
Till, when the Grecian hand unclasped thy zone,
Almost didst thou forget to be a slave?

And when thy father's god with myriad slaughter
Ransomed thee at the last as if with gold,
And Agamemnon's fingers loosed their hold
Among thy tresses, O thou ravished daughter,

And when the Grecians sailed thee home again,
Threading the islands toward thy native cape,
No more a simple maid! what of thy rape
And thine unwilling helpless rapture then

Didst thou remember, leaning on the mast
That dipt into the winds like a god's oar?
Didst thou gaze backward toward the Trojan shore,
Willing a little at the very last?

TO A POET

What are you doing like a naughty child
To the original NON-ENTITY,
Without a wedding and a little wild,
Those moments when you say of beauty: "BE"?

THE INNER SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STATUES SEATED OUTSIDE THE BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

How natural the way that they have greeted
Each other, like two girls excused at school:
"*Sister of bronze upon the granite seated,*
Hast thou an easy stool?"

THE MASTERPIECE

I think ere any early poet awed
Men with a haunted image of Mankind,
They buried in a grave gone out of mind
The supreme poet who imagined God.

OUT OF DOORS

I hear the wings, the winds, the river pass,
And toss the fretful book upon the grass.
Poor book, it could not cure my soul of aught—
It has itself the old disease of thought.

ABOUT AN ALLEGORY

It was the earth that Dante trod
When he trod Hell, it was the earth,
Itself sufficient for the hearth
That warms the hands of a cold God.

WALLACE STEVENS (1879-)

LE MONOCLE DE MON ONCLE

I

"Mother of heaven, regina of the clouds,
O sceptre of the sun, crown of the moon,
There is not nothing, no, no never nothing,
Like the clashed edges of two words that kill."
And so I mocked her in magnificent measure.
Or was it that I mocked myself alone?
I wish that I might be a thinking stone.
The sea of spuming thought foists up again
The radiant bubble that she was. And then
A deep up-pouring from some saltier well
Within me, bursts its watery syllable.

II

A red bird flies across the golden floor.
It is a red bird that seeks out his choir
Among the choirs of wind and wet and wing.
A torrent will fall from him when he finds.
Shall I uncrumple this much-crumpled thing?
I am a man of fortune greeting heirs;
For it has come that thus I greet the spring.
These choirs of welcome choir for me farewell.
No spring can follow past meridian.
Yet you persist with anecdotal bliss
To make believe a starry *connaissance*.

III

Is it for nothing, then, that old Chinese
Sat titivating by their mountain pools
Or in the Yangste studied out their beards?
I shall not play the flat historic scale.
You know how Utamaro's beauties sought

The end of love in their all-speaking braids.
You know the mountainous coiffures of Bath.
Alas! Have all the barbers lived in vain
That not one curl in nature has survived?
Why, without pity on these studious ghosts,
Do you come dripping in your hair from sleep?

IV

This luscious and impeccable fruit of life
Falls, it appears, of its own weight to earth.
When you were Eve, its acrid juice was sweet,
Untasted, in its heavenly, orchard air.
An apple serves as well as any skull
To be the book in which to read a round,
And is as excellent, in that it is composed
Of what, like skulls, comes rotting back to ground.
But it excels in this, that as the fruit
Of love, it is a book too mad to read
Before one merely reads to pass the time.

V

In the high west there burns a furious star.
It is for fiery boys that star was set
And for sweet-smelling virgins close to them.
The measure of the intensity of love
Is measure, also, of the verve of earth.
For me, the firefly's quick, electric stroke
Ticks tediously the time of one more year.
And you? Remember how the crickets came
Out of their mother grass, like little kin,
In the pale nights, when your first imagery
Found inklings of your bond to all that dust.

VI

If men at forty will be painting lakes
The ephemeral blues must merge for them in one,
The basic slate, the universal hue.

There is a substance in us that prevails.
But in our amours amorists discern
Such fluctuations that their scrivening
Is breathless to attend each quirky turn.
When amorists grow bald, then amours shrink
Into the compass and curriculum
Of introspective exiles, lecturing.
It is a theme for Hyacinth alone.

VII

The mules that angels ride come slowly down
The blazing passes, from beyond the sun.
Descensions of their tinkling bells arrive.
These muleteers are dainty of their way.
Meantime, centurions guffaw and beat
Their shrilling tankards on the table-boards.
This parable, in sense, amounts to this:
The honey of heaven may or may not come,
But that of earth both comes and goes at once.
Suppose these couriers brought amid their train
A damsel heightened by eternal bloom.

VIII

Like a dull scholar, I behold, in love,
An ancient aspect touching a new mind.
It comes, it blooms, it bears its fruit and dies.
This trivial trope reveals a way of truth.
Our bloom is gone. We are the fruit thereof.
Two golden gourds distended on our vines,
We hang like warty squashes, streaked and rayed,
Into the autumn weather, splashed with frost,
Distorted by hale fatness, turned grotesque.
The laughing sky will see the two of us
Washed into rinds by rotting winter rains.

IX

In verses wild with motion, full of din,
Loudened by cries, by clashes, quick and sure
As the deadly thought of men accomplishing
Their curious fates in war, come, celebrate
The faith of forty, ward of Cupido.
Most venerable heart, the lustiest conceit
Is not too lusty for your broadening.
I quiz all sounds, all thoughts, all everything
For the music and manner of the paladins
To make oblation fit. Where shall I find
Bravura adequate to this great hymn?

X

The fops of fancy in their poems leave
Memorabilia of the mystic spouts,
Spontaneously watering their gritty soils.
I am a yeoman, as such fellows go.
I know no magic trees, no balmy boughs,
No silver-ruddy, gold-vermilion fruits.
But, after all, I know a tree that bears
A semblance to the thing I have in mind.
It stands gigantic, with a certain tip
To which all birds come sometime in their time.
But when they go that tip still tips the tree.

XI

If sex were all, then every trembling hand
Could make us squeak, like dolls, the wished-for words.
But note the unconscionable treachery of fate,
That makes us weep, laugh, grunt and groan, and shout
Doleful heroics, pinching gestures forth
From madness or delight, without regard
To that first, foremost law. Anguishing hour!
Last night, we sat beside a pool of pink,
Clippered with lilies scudding the bright chromes,

Keen to the point of starlight, while a frog
Boomed from his very belly odious chords.

XII

A blue pigeon it is, that circles the blue sky,
On side-long wing, around and round and round.
A white pigeon it is, that flutters to the ground,
Grown tired of flight. Like a dark rabbi, I
Observed, when young, the nature of mankind,
In lordly study. Every day, I found
Man proved a gobbet in my mincing world.
Like a rose rabbi, later, I pursued,
And still pursue, the origin and course
Of love, but until now I never knew
That fluttering things have so distinct a shade.

TO THE ONE OF FICTIVE MUSIC

Sister and mother and diviner love,
And of the sisterhood of the living dead
Most near, most clear, and of the clearest bloom,
And of the fragrant mothers the most dear
And queen, and of diviner love the day
And flame and summer and sweet fire, no thread
Of cloudy silver sprinkles in your gown
Its venom of renown, and on your head
No crown is simpler than the simple hair.

Now, of the music summoned by the birth
That separates us from the wind and sea,
Yet leaves us in them, until earth becomes,
By being so much of the things we are,
Gross effigy and simulacrum, none
Gives motion to perfection more serene
Than yours, out of our imperfections wrought,
Most rare, or ever of more kindred air
In the laborious weaving that you wear.

For so retentive of themselves are men
That music is intensest which proclaims
The near, the clear, and vaunts the clearest bloom,
And of all vigils musing the obscure,
That apprehends the most which sees and names,
As in your name, an image that is sure,
Among the arrant spices of the sun,
O bough and bush and scented vine, in whom
We give ourselves our likest issuance.

Yet not too like, yet not so like to be
Too near, too clear, saving a little to endow
Our feigning with the strange unlike, whence springs
The difference that heavenly pity brings.
For this, musician, in your girdle fixed
Bear other perfumes. On your pale head wear
A band entwining, set with fatal stones.
Unreal, give back to us what once you gave:
The imagination that we spurned and crave.

SEA SURFACE FULL OF CLOUDS

I

In that November off Tehuantepec,
The slopping of the sea grew still one night
And in the morning summer hued the deck

And made one think of rosy chocolate
And gilt umbrellas. Paradisal green
Gave suavity to the perplexed machine

Of ocean, which like limpid water lay.
Who, then, in that ambrosial latitude
Out of the light evolved the moving blooms,

Who, then, evolved the sea-blooms from the clouds
Diffusing balm in that Pacific calm?
C'était mon enfant, mon bijou, mon âme.

The sea-clouds whitened far below the calm
And moved, as blooms move, in the swimming green
And in its watery radiance, while the hue

Of heaven in an antique reflection rolled
Round those flotillas. And sometimes the sea
Poured brilliant iris on the glistening blue.

II

In that November off Tehuantepec
The slopping of the sea grew still one night.
At breakfast jelly yellow streaked the deck

And made one think of chop-house chocolate
And sham umbrellas. And a sham-like green
Capped summer-seeming on the tense machine

Of ocean, which in sinister flatness lay.
Who, then, beheld the rising of the clouds
That strode submerged in that malevolent sheen,

Who saw the mortal massives of the blooms
Of water moving on the water-floor?
C'était mon frère du ciel, ma vie, mon or.

The gongs rang loudly as the windy booms
Hoo-hooed it in the darkened ocean-blooms.
The gongs grew still. And then blue heaven spread

Its crystalline pendentives on the sea
And the macabre of the water-glooms
In an enormous undulation fled.

III

In that November off Tehuantepec,
The slopping of the sea grew still one night
And a pale silver patterned on the deck

And made one think of porcelain chocolate
And pied umbrellas. An uncertain green,
Piano-polished, held the tranced machine

Of ocean, as a prelude holds and holds.
Who, seeing silver petals of white blooms
Unfolding in the water, feeling sure

Of the milk within the saltiest spurge, heard, then,
The sea unfolding in the sunken clouds?
Oh! C'était mon extase et mon amour.

So deeply sunken were they that the shrouds,
The shrouding shadows, made the petals black
Until the rolling heaven made them blue,

A blue beyond the rainy hyacinth,
And smiting the crevasses of the leaves
Deluged the ocean with a sapphire hue.

IV

In that November off Tehuantepec
The night-long slopping of the sea grew still.
A mallow morning dozed upon the deck

And made one think of musky chocolate
And frail umbrellas. A too-fluent green
Suggested malice in the dry machine

Of ocean, pondering dank stratagem.
Who then beheld the figures of the clouds
Like blooms secluded in the thick marine?

Like blooms? Like damasks that were shaken off
From the loosed girdles in the spangling must.
C'était ma foi, la nonchalance divine.

The nakedness would rise and suddenly turn
Salt masks of beard and mouths of bellowing,
Would— But more suddenly the heaven rolled

Its bluest sea-clouds in the thinking green
And the nakedness became the broadest blooms,
Mile-mallows that a mallow sun cajoled.

V

In that November off Tehuantepec
Night stilled the slopping of the sea. The day
Came, bowing and voluble, upon the deck,

Good clown. . . . One thought of Chinese chocolate
And large umbrellas. And a motley green
Followed the drift of the obese machine

Of ocean, perfected in indolence.
What pistache one, ingenious and droll,
Beheld the sovereign clouds as jugglery

And the sea as turquoise-turbaned Sambo, neat
At tossing saucers—cloudy-conjuring sea?
C'était mon esprit bâtard, l'ignominie.

The sovereign clouds came clustering. The conch
Of loyal conjuration trumped. The wind
Of green blooms turning crisped the motley hue

To clearing opalescence. Then the sea
And heaven rolled as one and from the two
Came fresh transfigurings of freshest blue.

MINA LOY

LOVE SONGS

I

Spawn of fantasies
Sitting the appraisable
Pig Cupid his rosy snout
Rooting erotic garbage

"Once upon a time"
Pulls a weed white star-topped
Among wild oats sown in mucous membrane
I would an eye in a Bengal light
Eternity in a sky-rocket
Constellations in an ocean
Whose rivers run no fresher
Than a trickle of saliva

There are suspect places

I must live in my lantern
Trimming subliminal flicker
Virginal to the bellows
Of experience
Colored glass.

II

The skin-sack
In which a wanton duality
Packed
All the completions of my infructuous impulses
Something the shape of a man
To the casual vulgarity of the merely observant
More of a clock-work mechanism
Running down against time
To which I am not paced
My finger-tips are numb from fretting your hair
A God's door-mat
On the threshold of your mind.

III

We might have coupled
In the bed-ridden monopoly of a moment
Or broken flesh with one another
At the profane communion table
Where wine is spilled on promiscuous lips

We might have given birth to a butterfly
With the daily news
Printed in blood on its wings.

HUMAN CYLINDERS

The human cylinders
Revolving in the enervating dusk
That wraps each closer in the mystery
Of singularity
Among the litter of a sunless afternoon
Having eaten without tasting
Talked without communion
And at least two of us
    Loved a very little
Without seeking
To know if our two miseries
In the lucid rush-together of automatons
Could form one opulent well-being

Simplifications of men
In the enervating dusk
Your indistinctness
Serves me the core of the kernel of you
When in the frenzied reaching-out of intellect to intellect
Leaning brow to brow communicative
Over the abyss of the potential
Concordance of respiration
Shames
Absence of corresponding between the verbal sensory
And reciprocity
Of conception
And expression
Where each extrudes beyond the tangible
One thin pale trail of speculation
From among us we have sent out
Into the enervating dusk

One little whining beast
Whose longing
Is to slink back to antediluvian burrow
And one elastic tentacle of intuition
To quiver among the stars

The impartiality of the absolute
Routs the polemic
Or which of us
Would not
Receiving the holy-ghost
Catch it and caging
Lose it
Or in the problematic
Destroy the Universe
With a solution.

MARIANNE MOORE (1887-

A GRAVE

Man looking into the sea,
taking the view from those who have as much right
to it as you have to it yourself,
it is human nature to stand in the middle of a thing
but you cannot stand in the middle of this:
the sea has nothing to give but a well excavated grave.
The firs stand in a procession, each with an emerald turkey-foot at the top,
reserved as their contours, saying nothing;
repression, however, is not the most obvious characteristic of the sea;
the sea is a collector, quick to return a rapacious look.
There are others besides you who have worn that look—
whose expression is no longer a protest; the fish no longer investigate them
for their bones have not lasted:

men lower nets, unconscious of the fact that they are desecrating a grave,
and row quickly away—the blades of the oars
moving together like the feet of water-spiders as if there were no such thing as death.
The wrinkles progress upon themselves in a phalanx—beautiful under networks of foam,
and fade breathlessly while the sea rustles in and out of the seaweed;
the birds swim through the air at top speed, emitting cat-calls as heretofore—
the tortoise-shell scourges about the feet of the cliffs, in motion beneath them
and the ocean, under the pulsation of lighthouse and noise of bell-buoys,
advances as usual, looking as if it were not that ocean in which dropped things are bound to sink—
in which if they turn and twist, it is neither with volition nor consciousness.

CRITICS AND CONNOISSEURS

There is a great amount of poetry in unconscious
fastidiousness. Certain Ming
products, imperial floor coverings of coach
wheel yellow, are well enough in their way but I have seen
something
that I like better—a
mere childish attempt to make an imperfectly ballasted animal stand up,
similar determination to make a pup
eat his meat on the plate.

I remember a swan under the willows in Oxford
with flamingo colored, maple-
leaflike feet. It reconnoitered like a battle
ship. Disbelief and conscious fastidiousness were the staple
ingredients in its

disinclination to move. Finally its hardihood was not
proof against its
proclivity to more fully appraise such bits
of food as the stream

bore counter to it; it made away with what I gave it
to eat. I have seen this swan and
I have seen you; I have seen ambition without
understanding in a variety of forms. Happening to stand
by an ant hill, I have
seen a fastidious ant carrying a stick, north,
south, east, west, till it turned on
itself, struck out from the flower bed into the lawn,
and returned to the point
from which it had started. Then abandoning the stick as
useless and overtaxing its
jaws with a particle of whitewash pill-like but
heavy, it again went through the same course of proced-
ure. What is
there in being able
to say that one has dominated the stream in an
attitude of self-defense,
in proving that one has had the experience
of carrying a stick?

DOCK RATS

There are human beings who seem to regard the place as
craftily
as we do—who seem to feel that it is a good place to come
home to. On what a river; wide—twinkling like a chopped
sea under some
of the finest shipping in the

world: the square-rigged four-rigged four-master, the liner, the
battleship like the two-
thirds submerged section of an iceberg; the tug

dipping and pushing, the bell striking as it comes; the steam yacht, lying
like a new made arrow on the

stream; the ferry-boat—a head assigned, one to each compartment, making
a row of chessmen set for play. When the wind is from the east,
the smell is of apples, of hay; the aroma increased and decreased
as the wind changes;

of rope, of mountain leaves for florists; as from the west,
it is aromatic of salt. Occasionally a parrakeet
from Brazil, arrives clasping and clawing; or a monkey—tail and feet
in readiness for an over-

ture; all arms and tail; how delightful! There is the sea, moving the bulk-
head with its horse strength; and the multiplicity of rudders
and propellers; the signals, shrill, questioning, peremptory, diverse;
the wharf cats and the barge dogs; it

is easy to overestimate the value of such things. One does
not live in such a place from motives of expediency
but because to one who has been accustomed to it, shipping is the
most interesting thing in the world.

THE LABORS OF HERCULES

To popularize the mule, its neat exterior
expressing the principle of accommodation reduced to a minimum:
to persuade one of austere taste, proud in the possession of home, and a musician—

that the piano is a free field for etching; that his "charming tadpole notes"
belong to the past when one had time to play them:
to persuade those self-wrought Midases of brains
whose fourteen-karat ignorance aspires to rise in value
"till the sky is the limit,"
that excessive conduct augurs disappointment,
that one must not borrow a long white beard and tie it on
and threaten with the scythe of time, the casually curious:
to each the bard with too elastic a selectiveness
that one detects creative power by its capacity to conquer one's detachment;
that while it may have more elasticity than logic,
it knows where it is going;
it flies along in a straight line like electricity
depopulating areas that boast of their remoteness:
to prove to the high priests of caste
that snobbishness is a stupidity,
the best side out, of age-old toadyism,
kissing the feet of the man above,
kicking the face of the man below:
to teach the patron-saints-to-atheists, the Coliseum
meet-me-alone-by-moonlight maudlin troubadour
that kickups for catstrings are not life
nor yet appropriate to death—that we are sick of the earth,
sick of the pig-sty, wild geese and wild men:
to convince snake-charming controversialists
that it is one thing to change one's mind,
another to eradicate it—that one keeps on knowing
"that the negro is not brutal,
that the Jew is not greedy,
that the Oriental is not immoral,
that the German is not a Hun."

PETER

Strong and slippery, built for the midnight grass-party confronted by four cats,
he sleeps his time away—the detached first claw on his foreleg which corresponds
to the thumb, retracted to its tip; the small tuft of fronds
or katydid legs above each eye, still numbering the units in each group;
the shadbones regularly set about his mouth, to droop or rise

in unison like the porcupine's quills—motionless. He lets himself be flat-
tened out by gravity, as it were a piece of seaweed tamed and weakened by
exposure to the sun; compelled when extended, to lie
stationary. Sleep is the result of his delusion that one must do as
well as one can for oneself; sleep—epitome of what is to

him as to the average person, the end of life. Demonstrate on him how
the lady caught the dangerous southern snake, placing a forked stick on either
side of its innocuous neck; one need not try to stir
him up; his prune shaped head and alligator eyes are not a party to the
joke. Lifted and handled, he may be dangled like an eel or set

up on the forearm like a mouse; his eyes bisected by pupils of a pin's
width, are flickeringly exhibited, then covered up. May be? I should say,
might have been; when he has been got the better of in a

dream—as in a fight with nature or with cats—we all know it. Profound sleep is
not with him, a fixed illusion. Springing about with froglike ac-

curacy, emitting jerky cries when taken in the hand, he is himself
again; to sit caged by the rungs of a domestic chair would be unprofit-
able—human. What is the good of hypocrisy? It
is permissible to choose one's employment, to abandon the wire nail, the
roly-poly, when it shows signs of being no longer a pleas-

ure, to score the adjacent magazine with a double line of strokes. He can
talk, but insolently says nothing. What of it? When one is frank, one's very
presence is a compliment. It is clear that he can see
the virtue of naturalness, that he is one of those who do not regard
the published fact as a surrender. As for the disposition

invariably to affront, an animal with claws wants to have to use
them; that eel-like extension of trunk into tail is not an accident. To
leap, to lengthen out, divide the air—to purloin, to pursue,
to tell the hen: fly over the fence, go in the wrong way in your perturba-
tion—this is life; to do less would be nothing but dishonesty.

JEANNE D'ORGE

THE ENCHANTED CASTLE

We climbed to it by secret flights
of kisses . . .

Jeanne D'Orge

When the door burst open
it vanished . . .
Crash . . .
Bump . . .
Earth again . . .
"What are they saying?"
"There's a baby coming . . ."
"He scuttled off on rat's feet . . ."
"The girl's in the ditch . . ."
"And the castle?"
"You don't mean to say
you believe that faëry story?"

PORTRAIT

Her significance lies
in an automatic conscience;
in a mind picked up after every punctual meal
in family virtues sewn on with a hand of steel
and family sins ripped off regardless;
in two accurate reproductions of herself
energetically modelled;
and in one small marionette
who gives her his name
and represents her at the polls.

THE CONVENT

Nice to be God . . .
My passions sit in long white rows
within the little chapel
sending incense up to me
or fast singing in lonely cells
or walk whispering together thro grey cloisters.
Last night a wildcat novice broke her vows
and now her sisters wear away the stone
praying for her.

They cannot guess who slipped the bolts
Who rode with her
Who gave her to her lover . . .
Nice to be God . . .

HELEN HOYT (1887-)

HOMAGE

Before me you bowed as before an altar,
And I reached down and drew you to my bosom;
Proud of your reverence, and reverence returning,
But craving most your love and not your awe.

My hands about your head curved themselves as holding
A treasure, fragile and of glad possession;
Dear were the bones of your skull beneath my fingers,
And I grew brave at thought of your defense.

Not as a man I felt you in my brooding,
But as a babe, a babe of my own body;
Precious your worth, but dearer your dependence;
Almost I wished to feed you at my breast.

And not to me, I knew, belonged your homage:
I but the vessel of your holy drinking;
The channel to you of that ancient wonder
Of love and womanhood, I but a woman.

Then never need your memory be shamefaced
That I have seen your flesh and soul at worship;
Do you think I did not kneel when you were kneeling?
Even lowlier bowed my head, and bowed my heart.

EVELYN SCOTT (1893-)

AUTUMN NIGHT

The moon is as complacent as a frog.
She sits in the sky like a blind white stone,
And does not even see Love
As she caresses his face with her contemptuous light.
She reaches her long white shivering fingers
Into the bowels of men.
Her tender superfluous probing into all that pollutes
Is like the immodesty of the mad.
She is a mad woman holding up her dress
So that her white belly shines.
Haughty,
Impregnable,
Ridiculous,
Silent and white as a debauched queen,
Her ecstasy is that of a cold and sensual child.

She is Death enjoying Life,
Innocently,
Lasciviously.

DAVID O'NEIL (1874-)

A MODERN ORCHARD

Oh! the tragedy
Of pruning souls
To a common height
That the fruit
May be reached
Without straining.

STARVATION PEAK EVENING

Towering it stood,
Alone;
Pinnacled in white
Its great naked torso
Purple against a turquoise sky
Unpitied in its greatness.

VERNAL SHOWERS

At the rude goodness
Of the rain
The flowers wince,
But drink.

MARSDEN HARTLEY

THE CRUCIFIXION OF NOEL

The situation is blue and white,
Inevitably.
High on the snowy hill, cramped with persistence of the frost,
Stands the little tree, all smiling with blue fruits,
Trickling with moss, made of tattered strings
Of moonlight.

Blue fruits, from the October in infinite twilights,
Ripe fruits fallen from the lush branches of renascent skies.
Blue fruits,
Cheeks of pale ladies, overcome with wakeful worshipping.

I saw them fall one evening, from "her" cheeks, when the
mountain
Of her love approached.
She was all blue then, all blue with height of sky submissions;
It was autumn time among the icebergs.

Marsden Hartley

Blue plenteousness,
Multitudinous curves of white parapluies
Overtaken with shower—lusts of the new summer afternoons.

What a beautiful harvest, I ventured.

Persimmons from the highest branches of the midnight
Of the south,
Leaning toward the mouth of the infant,
Orizaba.
Eyes from under the brows of the over-credulous;
Snowladen foreheads of both sexes, pallid with faith
In fiercely imagined joys;
Virginhood in its time of glaring,
Flaring certainty.

Sunbrushed antelopes leap in and out of the fervours
Beyond the light blue boughs.
On their young velvety horntips—steel coloured birds
With clipped, radiant plumage, sit fanning out their wings,
Whispers of many a commiserating dusk.
The airs that hum have the hilarity of Aurora's smile,
At the blue apex of midnight.
All about the branches of the Noel tree
Pass buoyant funerals of rainbows,
Aged with pain of summer.

Hush, baby of the incredible Friday-doom!
See! All the foreheads of the world have flashes
From the eyelids of the midnight on the pressed curves
Of them;
The girls and boys are dancing, with darts of dying rainbows
Impaled in the flesh of their knees.

I hear the ting-ting of the blue cymbals
Upon the white fingertips of the crucifixion crew;
They are floating—the ting-tings—
Over the breasts of adolescent icebergs

In my polar rendezvous.
A blanched cygnet glides across the frozen lake,
Under the Noel boughs.
The swan-child has in her beak a blue fish from the nets
Of the night fishermen.
Cygnet's eyes are still blue fruits, and her back
Is strewn with clips of frozen sunshine from the virginal blue
morning.
Ting-ting. Ting-ting. Ting-ting.

Blue raisins are dropping from the chilled boughs.
Ashes from the snowy hill are sifting into blue eyes,
And the wind hill carries the rune away.

Ting-ting. Ting-ting. Ting-ting.
A rope of ice has been stretched from the white earth
To the bluest arc in the sky.
The arms of Noel have been nailed with spikes of sapphire.

How white is Noel today!
Was he ever so white as in this last hour
Of his vanity?
Ting-ting. Ting-ting. Ting-ting.

Blue drops falling from sapphire nails,
Just where they pierce the white, white flesh of Noel.
Is there pleasure perhaps, in the dropping
Of the drops?
Little cymbal tones, falling in circles
Upon thick pavements of ice—
Noel is crucified!!!

The fishermen of the night are whispering
With the awakened ones among the nets—
Noel is beautiful in his new position.

Ting-ting. Ting-ting. Ting-ting.
The cymbals now have whitened.

WALLACE GOULD (1882-)

MOMENT MUSICALE

This morning I went out to look for roses. Late,
O poppy lady, late, with the sun high, the sunlight hot—
with only a little while before the leaves, yet dewy, would cease to glisten—
I went out into the garden, alone.
I lingered there.
I searched there, long.
I found no roses—
found not even their withered petals. All about the garden
I found their porcelain pericarps, but I had come too late—
not of hour, but of day, to find the flowers that I sought. All, all were dead—
I might have known.
I knew the time for the seeds of thistles, thoughtless, to ride the sportive winds.
I knew the time for the leaves of birches, cheerless, to sidle sadly away. Surely I knew
the time for the petals of roses, hopeless, to face their fate. I knew well—
but had forgotten, for I seldom care
whether I find the rose bush all in bloom,
or past the bloom, or shedding leaves, or bare.

Too well I know the time that roses die.
By latter June too many of them fall.
Though many straggle on, throughout July,
by latter August all are dead. Not all—
for years ago I found a lonely rose
alive when almost all the autumn leaves
lay dead, awaiting burial in the snows,
and when the rose bush cowered in the eaves,—

But what of that?
What of the rose?

Give me the poppy.
Only this morning,
three scarlet poppies by the garden path
unfurled their flameous crepe, adroitly, archly, graciously, as
if to greet
one who should come too late to find the rose.
Luring, like shecats fawning, at high spring—
gaudy, like painted paphians good to seek—
languorous, flushed, like bacchantes reveling—
they waited by the path as if to speak
as if to murmur things that women say
who say them subtly, waiting by the way,—
women like you,
O poppy lady.

Strum the guitar. The little gusts that fret
so lowly in the dense veranda vines,
teasing the fumes that leave your cigarette,
and uttering their melancholy whines,
rail at the movements of the fitful hand
that pulls the dulcet fancies from the strings—
now olden ditties plain to understand,
and now capricious, incoherent things.
I feel that you are suffering. Every breath
forcing the fumes upon the nervous gusts,
wails, in a way, prophetic of a death
now feared, now craved, of all the once dear lusts
ill with a tedium that I, too, know.
I understand your fitful manner. So—
strum the guitar. I like the veranda vines—
neglected and grown wild, and better thus—
a lattice having none but godly lines.
Pan built the lattice, let me say, for us.
Here, peering if we will beyond the screen,
together we may watch the human mime.
Here we may laugh, if possible, unseen—

or kiss. Could there be better place, or time?
I cannot laugh at what goes on outside;
nor can I weep, nor thrill to what I see.
Can you? What is the gesture, word, or stride,
that is not too well known to you or me?
I have been satiated to the full.
You are enthralling. But the mime is dull.
Strum the guitar. The clearness of your eyes—
the very clearness of a tropic sea—
discloses portions of a wreck that lies
too deep for salvage or recovery,
a treasure ship once laden to the prow
with gold, choice wines, rich fabrics, and a host
of rare diaphanous gems, but riding low—
too low, and doomed to end among the lost.
Perchance it foundered in a peaceful swell—
rudder or sail neglected for long dreams.
Or in a stormy trough, when lightning fell,
too quickly sundering the straining beams.
I wish that it had drifted, to this day.
I wish that it were yet to drift my way.

Strum the guitar.
I want no more of what men call their faith.
I want no more of what men call their hope.
Strum the guitar.
I want diversion—
sustenance for the beggared hours, famished, slowly dying,
slowly tottering off to die;
not that they be rejuvenated, no—
but that they shall not perish as they go.
I loathe them all.
Strum the guitar.
Sustain one hour,
if only one, that it may thrill, not pall—
thrill as by suasion of your luring flower.

'Strum the guitar. Play, poppy lady, play
the tunes that go with waiting by the way.

AFTER TSCHAIKOWSKY

Hasten. The countenance of the year is hardened, the face wan, drawn—
set by a fearful thought. The haze deceives. It is merciful.
Hasten. The days are not far off when the year will weep obliviously.
The days of oblivious weeping will come too soon, and in those days
the year will not be able to hear you above its own sobbing, its lamentation, protracted, resounding.
Hasten. The days are not far off when only memories will be left.
The days that will follow those of weeping, will shimmer with phantoms, all impassive,
wandering about by the light of a sun that will then be helpless. Come.
Hasten, if you are coming, for the long storm may burst before its time.

If you come when the long storm shall have burst upon us,
you will be too late for even a word.
If you come when the long storm shall have passed away—
when the long storm shall have left the meadows torn and crushed—
you will be too late for even a glance.
Hasten. The sun is already dimmed by the woes that are weaving together in the west. It is making its last appeal.

I wait. Except for the rustle of diligent squirrels, there is no sound in the ragged woods.
The birds of song have gone, forgetting, are singing their way into another warmth.
Belated crows are flapping off through the yellow bush.

The mountains are estranged, one from another, by the weaving
woes of the skies.
As the days pass by, the tawn creeps over the hillsides. I wait.
Hasten. The leaves are already scrawny. Like the hands of
the aged,
the leaves are spotted with brown. The veins of the leaves are
coarse.

All is over with all the flowers.
They grew where they would, and they are dying.
They were sown, or were planted, and they are dying.
The clover persisted, long, but now it succumbs. It is withered.
It adds to the tawn of the countryside.
I wait. But I do not weep. I do not care.

Many are whispering of change.
Many are turning away their faces.
Many are clinging to what is left.

I wait. The sunlight, supplicative, is calling together the moun-
tains. It entreats them to be compassionate.
At times I think you will soon return.
The pure blue darkness purges the past, and every night
the past is absolved, with the priestly approach of the pure
white moon.
At times I think you will never return.
I shall wait. But I shall not weep. I shall not care.

DRUNKEN HERACLES

(*Metropolitan Museum*)

Did he steal away from the great Omphale for a night—
from female garb and perchance from the leer of Hermaphro-
ditus?
Or is he rid of Omphale forever?
Perchance he has just finished cleaning the Augean stables,

having begun his labor with a pardonable deep draught, to end with one too many.
Perchance he has been back home, in old Thebes, after an absence of many years,
and there has met with half forgotten friends,
companionable failures capable of devotion
that only men possess and many drinks make words of.
Perchance he imbibed for a reason all his own—
a reason poisonous as the philtre of Nessus.
But surely he is drunk.

Good. But alone? A hero drunk and alone?
Should there not be a crowd of Thebans following him beyond the gates?
Should there not be at least two friends to steady the reeling hero?
Or two pretty flute girls playing silly tunes,—
treading warily just behind the big bare man,
and pausing now and then for a titter, though losing a note or two?
Surely there should be old Chiron to accompany, with a train of fauns and timbrelplayers—
as no doubt there really is, to the mind of the tipsy man himself—
a straggling train of fauns, timbrelplayers, slaves with amphoræ running over,
voluptuous bacchantes fuddled and flushed, satyrs drooling,
all exultant,
all worshipful—
now of Dionysus,
now of Heracles.
All are there.
No drunken man is ever alone.

Step as high as you will, Heracles, and wherever you may.
Whoop, bellow, brag, to the sound of timbrel and flute, the praise of men, the giggle of gods.

My countrymen would say that you disgrace yourself, as a
national hero, even to the point of disqualification,
and surely would squirm at the sight of your august bareness,—
for almost all my countrymen are sexual sceptics, atheists even,
who do not trust in their maker,—
but I should like to see our own big man, our Washington,
returning to us from old Alexandria, in exactly your condition,
followed by a pair of pretty flappers playing ukuleles
and tittering with the orthodox among us.

But beware, Heracles. No drunken man is ever alone.
Do not forget that of all companions, none is quite so insidious,
vicious, dangerous,
as memory.
Beware of it,—
for long ago you strangled two great snakes.

NIGHT SONG

Sing, nigger in the distance, coming up the hill.
Sing to the broom, the watermelon, the wind, the moon, the
paradise of niggers, the god of niggers.
Sing to all the dead niggers about you.
The old road swarms with dead and forgotten niggers.
Sing to them, nigger.

Forgotten old women, old, old, pass by smiling, looking straight
through the very earth, their burdens on their heads—
or they sit by the wayside, swaying, smiling, their burdens be-
side them.
All are smiling.
Forgotten old men, old, old, pass by smiling, their hickory canes
clicking—
or they sit by the wayside, swaying, smiling, their canes bracing
their bowed heads.
All are smiling.
Do not fear.

They smile on you because you are singing.
Sing to them, nigger.
Forgotten young niggers pass by smiling, their eyes flashing by the light of the high Virginia moon, their teeth gleaming.
Forgotten yallergals pass by smiling.
They smile on you because you are a singer.
Sing to them, nigger.

Scores of niggers, long forgotten, pass by singing.
Scores of niggers, long forgotten, pass by wailing, moaning.
Scores of niggers, long forgotten, pass by toiling, rolling tobacco hogsheads, on, on toward Richmond,
all the while singing, toiling at song.
Do not fear.
Sing with them, nigger.

Do not fear.
But if any young nigger should ask you where you have been, do not answer.
Keep on singing.
If a yallergal should sidle up, and should ask you where you are going,
do not answer.
Better, much better, to keep on singing.
Sing to her, nigger.

I know your voice, my own little nigger—
lying, thieving, dirty little nigger.
Lift up your voice.
Sing to the dead.
Sing to the moon.
Lie, if you will, to the moon, to the dead.
You would lie to the very god of niggers.
But do not fear.
Sing your lies—
ah, sing to him, nigger.

Wallace Gould

COMMUNION

I trod the January snows. I paused. There were no winds, no clouds—
no traces of the absent moon. I looked long at the stars.

The stars were flashing. From a swarthy blue that was boundless, many millions of stars were flashing—
millions of miles distant,
millions of miles apart.
No one stood beside me.
No one anywhere under the stars awaited my approach. I murmured—

"I am glad that no one stands at my elbow.
I am glad that all my cravings are buried in the snows.
I am glad that all my emotions are absent, with the winds, the clouds, the moon.
I am glad that they whom I have loved are as far off as the stars."

WILLIAM SAPHIER (1886-)

MEETING

Her glance swung my body
like a bell
in a long forgotten church
and the tingling emotions came forth
like sounds summoned,
at attention,
grouped around an altar
of a great love.
Stiff like a bronze pillar
I came
and drank the two tears

her eyes offered
like raised crystals
at a solemn farewell meeting.

HANIEL LONG (1888?-)

STUDENTS

I

I have great faith in this boy—
he makes me think of mountains.
Every now and then
he looms in the rear of the room
like a peak in the Andes:
but how would you like to teach
a peak in the Andes?

II

There are some who turn my class-room
into a morgue,
and I find this hard;
but he turns my class-room
into a rathskeller
with his face and his talk and his ways.
Therefore I prize him.

III

Sometimes I have nervous moments—
there is a girl who looks at me strangely
as much as to say,
You are a young man,
and I am a young woman,
and what are you going to do about it?
And I look at her as much as to say,
I am going to keep the teacher's desk between us, my dear,
as long as I can.

IV

A little cherubino comes in
when the class is all over,
and says she is so sorry,
that my class is such an inspiration,
and such a queer sensation,
but ten-thirty is an early hour,
and the street-car service poor.
And I tell her softly, that in heaven
the street-car service is always poor,
but the good little angels rise up early
and get to school on time.
And she says, "O, thank you,"
so effusively.

V

She needs a more exotic air to blossom in—
clash of cymbals should precede her elephant
down the street to school—
she should be black from head to toes,
wearing barbaric jewels—
and now that I think of it,
why couldn't she come through my class-room window
on the elephant's trunk?

VI

She regards me haughtily
as perhaps Mrs. Siddons
regarded the third George—
and after all, why should she not?
But I live in terror of hearing her say,
In that tragical voice of hers, some day,
Bid me, out, out, damned spot.

VII

He is the only one who ever dared
sit on my sacred desk

and rumple my sacred hair.
Yet he is the only one
who ever cared to carry my books
and call me "Maestro" in public.
And whenever I said a clever thing
he would exclaim, "Priceless, priceless!"

VIII

All he sees is the dollar sign,
and he suspects me
of wasting his time.
O for some clever accountant
to compute my cash value—
for then I could write dollar signs
across the blackboard behind me,
and he would pay strict attention
and make little entries
in a little ledger.

ROBERT CARLTON BROWN (1886-)

I AM ALADDIN

I am Aladdin.
Wanting a thing I have but to snap my fingers.
Jinn, bring me a lady,
The lady with the magic kiss
That turns troubles into joys.
The lady of the soft white throat
And shell-tint cheeks.
Ah, here you are, Lady!
Thank you, Jinn.
Lady, sing to me
A song as gorgeous as the plumage of a Bird of Paradise.
Music melts in your mouth,
Becoming vaporous perfume,
Utterly intoxicating me.

Now you may dance for me a while.
Weave a delirious design
With your body,
Ah, you are like a gold fish
Glinting gaily
Darting through sparkling waters.
There, that will do, Lady.
Say you love me, now.
Yes, yes, I believe you.
I could not doubt that voice of yours
As full of the abandon of expression
As your dance.
And now, Lady,
The magic kiss!
Ummm! That is good.
Jinn, take her away.

H. L. DAVIS (1894-)

PROUD RIDERS

We rode hard, and brought the cattle from brushy springs,
From heavy dying thickets, leaves wet as snow;
From high places, white-grassed, and dry in the wind;
Draws where the quaken-asps were yellow and white,
And the leaves spun and spun like money spinning.
We poured them onto the trail, and rode for town.

Men in the fields leaned forward in the wind,
Stood in the stubble and watched the cattle passing.
The wind bowed all, the stubble shook like a shirt.
We threw the reins by the yellow and black fields, and rode,
And came, riding together, into the town
Which is by the grey bridge, where the alders are.
The white-barked alder trees dropping big leaves
Yellow and black, into the cold black water.
Children, little cold boys, watched after us—

The freezing wind flapped their clothes like windmill paddles.
Down the flat frosty road we crowded the herd:
High stepped the horses for us, proud riders in autumn.

RUNNING VINES IN A FIELD

Look up, you loose-haired women in the field,
From work, and thoughtless picking at the ground.
Cease for a little: pay me a little heed.

It is early: the red leaves of the blackberry vines
Are hoar with frosty dew, the ground's still wet,
There is vapor over toward the summer fallow.
And you three make a garden, being put by—
Since you are too old for love you make a garden?

It is love with me, and not these dark red frosty leaves
The vines of which you root for garden-space.
You will be concerned, you three used up and set by:
I could speak of the red vines, of pastures, of young trees;
And you would dibble at love as you do the vine-roots.

It is early, but before your backs be warmed,
And before all this dew be cleared and shed,
I shall be half among your hearts with speech:
Love, and my sorrow, the disastrous passages,
So that you'll cease all gardening, dangle dark red
Vines in your hands not knowing it, and whisper.

They forget me for a little pride of old time.

MAXWELL BODENHEIM (1892-)

DEATH

I shall walk down the road.
I shall turn and feel upon my feet
The kisses of Death, like scented rain.
For Death is a black slave with little silver birds

Perched in a sleeping wreath upon his head.
He will tell me, his voice like jewels
Dropped into a satin bag,
How he has tip-toed after me down the road,
His heart made a dark whirlpool with longing for me.
Then he will graze me with his hands
And I shall be one of the sleeping, silver birds
Between the cold waves of his hair, as he tip-toes on.

REAR PORCHES OF AN APARTMENT BUILDING

A sky that has never known sun, moon, or stars,
A sky that is like a dead, kind face
Would have the color of your eyes,
O servant-girl singing of pear-trees in the sun
And scraping the yellow fruit you once picked
When your lavender-white eyes were alive.
On the porch above you sit two women
With faces the color of dry brown earth;
They knit grey rosettes and nibble cakes.
And on the porch above them are three children
Gravely kissing each other's foreheads,
And an ample nurse with a huge red fan. . . .
The death of the afternoon to them
Is but the lengthening of blue-black shadows on brick walls.

METAPHYSICAL POEM

Your pocket-handkerchief is large enough
To cover all you see of this round moon,
And yet the intellects within this disc
May skip in widely frosty afternoon.

What men call size is but a shrunken fear
Within their eyes that makes them fabricate
Small explanations of huge mysteries
And warm exaggerations of small fate.

Again men look upon what seems to be
The shifting of events and call them time,
Without perceiving that the moving noise
Is only stillness breaking into rhyme.

For Christian, pagan, scientist, and fool,
Console themselves with measurements and walls,
Without allowing fantasy and thought
To roam unfrightened past the vast, black halls

Where life receives an ordeal or a boon
After the hurried arrogance of death.
With blind and witless confidence men cling
To well-known forms and give them pleasing breath.

HERE IS YOUR REALISM

Exhibit A; the edge of this long knife:
Earth broken into hard, exquisite mood:
A blameless subtlety compelled to brood
Unwittingly against the flesh of life.

Exhibit B; the face of this dead girl
Repenting in a lonely glen for weeks,
With feelings still confessing on the cheeks
Turned into rotten dreams of green and pearl.

Her eyes reveal the bulging rendezvous
Where thieves and cherubs, caught by emptiness,
Gave up their fight and merged into a guess
Concerning shadows just beyond their view.

Her lips, once gossiping and vixenish,
Have stiffly drawn apart and indicate
A drolly stifled yielding to their fate,
As though they strove to speak an insane wish.

Exhibit C; the man who strangled her
Because her mangled, wrangling heart became
A greedy spectre, threatening him with shame;
Transforming heart and mind to one, crude blur.

And when she cried: "You've got to marry me
Or else I'll tell my father what you did,"
The meanly squirming, childish sentence slid
Within his hands and made them wild and free.

He sits now in a vapid rooming-house
And spies a form upon the empty bed.
One spot of dread moves slowly on his head,
Like some invisible, resistless louse.

His fingers itch to capture it, and steal
Now on his eyes, now on his parted lips.
It crawls away from them and once more grips
More than his skin and more than pain can feel.

Denouncing platitudes, Jehovah's wrath,
And frenzied self-defences huddled close
Within his heart grow suddenly morose,
As though they longed for some escaping path.

And then he whispers: 'She was nagging me.
If she had only kept her damn tongue still,"
And for an instant new resentments kill
The swollen wraiths of guilt and perfidy.

EMANUEL CARNEVALI (1898-)

SERENADE

Come on, don't be afraid you'll spoil me
if you light the gas in your room
and show me
that you have heard my cries.

Are you so poor in kisses
that you're so stingy with them;
and is your heart so ravaged
that you won't let me pick there
one or two flowers
to stick in my jacket's
button-hole?

I play my serenade
beating with my clenched fist
on a gong and a drum.
What I want is to give you
the sound of what a man is.

I love my eyes and lips
better than yours;
besides, the dampness of the night
pierces my shoes.

I can be as capricious
as you can be, don't worry!

Come on, open that window
or I'll go home.

IN THIS HOTEL

The headwaiter says:
"Nice day to-day!"
He smiles sentimentally.
The headwaiter says:
"It will rain to-day!"
He frowns gracefully.
Those are the greetings, every morning,
To every old lady,
And every old gent,
And every old rogue,
And every young couple—
To every guest.

And I, who do not sleep, who wait and watch for the dawn,
One day I would come down to the world
I would have a trumpet as powerful as the wind,
And I would trumpet out to the world
The splendid commonplace:
"Nice day to-day!"
And another day I would cry out in despair,
"It will rain to-day!"
For every old lady,
And every old gent,
And every old rogue,
And every young couple—
Are they not guests in this hotel,
Where the ceiling is the sky
And the floor is the earth,
And the rooms are the houses?

But I, I—this wretched, tired thing—
May I ask for a job
As headwaiter
Of this hotel?

HIS MAJESTY THE LETTER-CARRIER

Half past seven in the morning
And the sun winks at me,
Half hidden by the last house of the street.
His long fingers
Scare away these trotting little men
Who rush westward from the east to their jobs.
Laughing, the sun pursues them . . .
Ah, there he is!
Who? . . . The letter-carrier, of course!
(What do you think I got up so early for?)
You never see him run—
He is so proud
Because he's got my happiness in that dirty bag:

He's got a kiss from my sweetheart,
Some money for me to buy some food,
And a white, nice collar.
That's why he's so conceited,
That's why he wants to show
That he doesn't know the sun is behind him,
That the laughing sun is behind him
Pushing him along to make him bring me my happiness;
A kiss from my sweetheart,
Some money to buy some food and a clean collar,
And a letter from an editor that says:
"You're a great poet, young man!"

Damn it! I guess he heard me raving about him:
He passed by my door and didn't even turn around.
What shall I do, what shall I do?

Oh, never mind—tomorrow, tomorrow!

ISIDOR SCHNEIDER (1896-)

INSECTS

Clockwork beings, winding out their lives—
souls would kill them as machines kill us.
They are not stranger to us. Their shellacked
and felted bodies built in sections, grooved
to make elastic their wire-tendoned strength,
we too have made with rougher metals
and with coarser cloth. Clanging, they fill
the booming Summer, fill the grass, the air,
an exposition of well geared machines.
They whirr and hammer; the sun's rays
dart power to them on glittering rails;
and through the pastoral night the stationed stars
now seem a swarm of midges. Trembling on
the unseen eaves of space, the milky way

swings a rumpled spider web, where, guttering,
the captured stars exert their dim,
funereal, phosphorescent light.

SUNDAY MORNING

Mushrooms pert and pink
her emergent toes,—
dreams gigantic shrink,
in light the world grows.

Musks of moulted sleep
from her nostrils fall,
and her eyes still keep
sleep within recall.

Never wind did bend
body of the wheat
subtler than her wend
in her stretchings sweet.

Camel soft her heels,
motion blooms on her,
kisses her mouth feels,
late awakener.

Islands in her bath
makes her coral flesh,
from her knees a path
to her hair's gold mesh.

Towels suck her dry
like a midday fruit;
there my seedling eye
hungrily takes root.

Knotted well our lips,
close our bodies sway,
wharf now and now ship,
cargo stored the day.

Breakfast in noonbeam,
windows crack with light,
pour a golden cream
on the dishes' white.

Little fiddling jaws
make a tidbit of
laugh's digestive pause,
relish words of love.

Like fulfilling oaths
(this my fact not hers)
common clouds called clothes
thick her body blurs.

But the perching eye
her again divests
seeing where they lie,
beaches of her breasts.

Hearty day gathers us,
morning melts in sun,
blue sky fathers us,
green field calls us on.

E. E. CUMMINGS (1896-)

FROM "SONNETS—REALITIES"

the Cambridge ladies who live in furnished souls
are unbeautiful and have comfortable minds
(also, with the church's protestant blessings
daughters, unscented shapeless spirited)
they believe in Christ and Longfellow, both dead,
are invariably interested in so many things—
at the present writing one still finds
delighted fingers knitting for the is it Poles?
perhaps. While permanent faces coyly bandy
scandal of Mrs. N and Professor D

. . . the Cambridge ladies do not care, above
Cambridge if sometimes in its box of
sky lavender and cornerless, the
moon rattles like a fragment of angry candy

FROM "SONNETS—UNREALITIES"

it may not always be so; and i say
that if your lips, which i have loved, should touch
another's, and your dear strong fingers clutch
his heart, as mine in time not far away;
if on another's face your sweet hair lay
in such a silence as i know, or such
great writhing words as, uttering overmuch,
stand helplessly before the spirit at bay;

if this should be, i say if this should be—
you of my heart, send me a little word;
that i may go unto him, and take his hands,
saying, Accept all happiness from me.
Then shall i turn my face, and hear one bird
sing terribly afar in the lost lands.

FROM "SONNETS—ACTUALITIES"

notice the convulsed orange inch of moon
perching on this silver minute of evening.

We'll choose the way to the forest—no offense
to you, white town whose spires softly dare.
Will take the houseless wisping rune
of road lazily carved on sharpening air.

Fields lying miraculous in violent silence

fill with microscopic whithering
. . . (that's the Black People, cherie,
who live under stones.) Don't be afraid

and we will pass the simple ugliness
of exact tombs, where a large road crosses
and all the people are minutely dead.

Then you will slowly kiss me

PORTRAIT

here is little Effie's head
whose brains are made of gingerbread
when the judgment day comes
God will find six crumbs

stooping by the coffinlid
waiting for something to rise
as the other somethings did—
you imagine His surprise

bellowing through the general noise
Where is Effie who was dead?
—to God in a tiny voice,
i am may the first crumb said

whereupon its fellow five
crumbs chuckled as if they were alive
and number two took up the song,
might i'm called and did no wrong

cried the third crumb, i am should
and this is my little sister could
with our big brother who is would
don't punish us for we were good;

and the last crumb with some shame
whispered unto God, my name
is must and with the others i've
been Effie who isn't alive

just imagine it I say
God amid a monstrous din
watch your step and follow me
stooping by Effie's little, in

(want a match or can you see?)
which the six subjunctive crumbs
twitch like mutilated thumbs:
picture His peering biggest whey

coloured face on which a frown
puzzles, but I know the way—
(nervously Whose eyes approve
the blessed while His ears are crammed

with the strenuous music of
the innumerable capering damned)
—staring wildly up and down
the here we are now judgment day

cross the threshold have no dread
lift the sheet back in this way.
here is little Effie's head
whose brains are made of gingerbread

FROM "IS 5"

I

it really must
be Nice, never to

have no imagination) or never
never to wonder about guys you used to (and them
slim hot queens with damn next to nothing

on) tangoing
(while a feller tries
to hold down the fifty bucks per
job with one foot and rock a

cradle with the other) it Must be
nice never to have no doubts about why you
put the ring
on (and watching her
face grow old and tired to which

you're married and hands get red washing
things and dishes) and to never, never really wonder i
mean about the smell
of babies and how you

know the damn rent's going to and everything and never, never
Never to stand at no window
because i can't sleep (smoking sawdust

cigarettes in the
middle of the night)

II

poets yeggs and thirsties

since we are spanked and put to sleep by dolls let
us not be continually astonished should
from their actions and speeches
sawdust perpetually leak

rather is it between such beddings and
bumpings of ourselves to be observed
how in this fundamental respect the well
recognised régime of childhood is reversed

meantime in dreams let us investigate
thoroughly each one his optima rerum first
having taken care to lie upon our
abdomens for greater privacy and lest
punished bottoms interrupt philosophy

III

my sweet old etcetera
aunt lucy during the recent

war could and what
is more did tell you just
what everybody was fighting

for,
my sister

isabel created hundreds
(and
hundreds) of socks not to
mention shirts fleaproof earwarmers

etcetera wristers etcetera, my
mother hoped that

i would die etcetera
bravely of course my father used
to become hoarse talking about how it was
a privilege and if only he
could meanwhile my

self etcetera lay quietly
in the deep mud et

cetera
(dreaming,
et
  cetera, of
Your smile
eyes knees and of your Etcetera)

ROBINSON JEFFERS (1887-)

PART III FROM "TAMAR"

They two had unbridled the horses
And tied them with long halters near the thicket
Under Mal Paso bridge and wandered east
Into the narrow cleft, they had climbed the summit
On the right and looked across the sea.
The steep path down, "What are we for?" said Tamar wearily,
  "to want and want and not dare know it."
"Because I dropped the faded irises," Lee answered, "you're unhappy. They were all withered, Tamar.
We have grown up in the same house." "The withered house

Of an old man and a withered woman and an idiot woman.
No wonder if we go mad, no wonder."
They came to the hid stream and Tamar said, "Sweet, green and cool,
After the mad white April sun: you wouldn't mind, Lee?
Here where it makes a pool: you mustn't look; but you're my brother. And then
I will stand guard for you." The murmur and splash of water made his fever fierier; something
Unfelt before kept his eyes seaward: why should he dread to see the round arm and clear throat
Flash from the hollow stream? He trembled, thinking "O we are beasts, a beast, what am I for?
Was the old man right, I must be drunk and a dancer and feed on the cheap pleasures, or it's dangerous?
Lovely and thoughtless, if she knew me how she'd loathe and avoid me. Her brother, brother. My sister.
Better the life with the bones, and all at once have broken."
Meanwhile Tamar
Uneasily dipped her wrists, and crouching in the leaf-grown bank
Saw her breasts in the dark mirror, she trembled backward
From a long ripple and timidly wading entered
The quiet translucence to the thighs. White-shining
Slender and virgin pillar, desire in water
Unhidden and half reflected among the interbranching ripples,
Arched with alder, over-woven with willow.
Ah Tamar, stricken with strange fever and feeling
Her own desirableness, half-innocent Tamar
Thought, "If I saw a snake in the water he would come now
And kill the snake, he is keen and fearless but he fears
Me I believe." Was it the wild rock coast
Of her breeding, and the reckless wind
In the beaten trees and the gaunt booming crashes
Of breakers under the rocks, or rather the amplitude
And wing-subduing immense earth-ending water
That moves all the west taught her this freedom? Ah Tamar,

It was not good, not wise, not safe, not provident,
Not even, for custom creates nature, natural,
Though all other license were; and surely her face
Grew lean and whitened like a mask, the lips
Thinned their rose to a split thread, the little breasts
Erected sharp bright buds but the white belly
Shuddered, sucked in. The lips writhed and no voice
Formed, and again, and a faint cry. "Tamar?"
He answered, and she answered, "Nothing. A snake in the water
Frightened me." And again she called his name.
"What is it, Tamar?" "Nothing. It is cold in the water.
Come, Lee, I have hidden myself all but the head.
Bathe, if you mean to bathe, and keep me company.
I won't look till you're in." He came, trembling.
He unclothed himself in a green depth and dared not
Enter the pool, but stared at the drawn scars
Of the old wound on his leg. "Come, Lee, I'm freezing.
Come, I won't look." He saw the clear-skinned shoulders
And the hollow of her back, he drowned his body
In the watery floor under the cave of foliage,
And heard her sobbing. When she turned, the great blue eyes
Under the auburn hair, streamed. "Lee.
We have stopped being children; I would have drowned myself;
If you hadn't taught me swimming—long ago—long ago, Lee—
When we were children." "Tamar, what is it, what is it?"
"Only that I want . . . death. You lie if you think
Another thing." She slipped face down and lay
In the harmless water, the auburn hair trailed forward
Darkened like weeds, the double arc of the shoulders
Floated, and when he had dragged her to the bank both arms
Clung to him, the white body in a sobbing spasm
Clutched him, he could not disentangle the white desire,
So they were joined (like drowning folk brought back
By force to bitter life) painfully, without joy.
The spasm fulfilled, poor Tamar, like one drowned indeed, lay pale and quiet

And careless of her nakedness. He, gulfs opening
Between the shapes of his thought, desired to rise and leave her
and was ashamed to.
He lay by her side, the cheek he kissed was cold like a smooth
stone, the blue eyes were half open,
The bright smooth body seemed to have suffered pain, not love.
One of her arms crushed both her breasts,
The other lay in the grass, the fingers clutching toward the roots
of the soft grass. "Tamar,"
He whispered, then she breathed shudderingly and answered,
"We have it, we have it. Now I know.
It was my fault. I never shall be ashamed again." He said
"What shall I do? Go away?
Kill myself, Tamar?" She contracted all her body and crouched
in the long grass, shivering.
"It hurts, there is blood here, I am too cold to bathe myself
again. O brother, brother,
Mine and twice mine. You knew already, a girl has got to
learn. I love you, I chose my teacher.
Mine, it was my doing." She flung herself upon him, cold white
and smooth, with sobbing kisses.
"I am so cold, dearest, dearest." The horses at the canyon
mouth tugged at their halters,
Dug pits under the restless forehooves, shivered in the hill-wind
At sundown, were not ridden till dark, it was near midnight
They came to the old house.

GRANITE AND CYPRESS

White-maned, wide-throated, the heavy-shouldered children of
the wind leap at the sea-cliff.
The invisible falcon
Brooded on water and bred them in wide waste places, in a
bride-chamber wide to the stars' eyes
In the center of the ocean,
Where no prows pass nor island is lifted . . . the sea beyond
Lobos is whitened with the falcon's

Passage, he is here now,
The sky is one cloud, his wing-feathers hiss in the white grass, my sapling cypresses writhing
In the fury of his passage
Dare not dream of their centuries of future endurance of tempest. (I have granite and cypress,
Both long-lasting,
Planted in the earth; but the granite sea-bowlders are prey to no hawk's wing, they have taken worse pounding,
Like me they remember
Old wars and are quiet; for we think that the future is one piece with the past, we wonder why tree-tops
And people are so shaken.)

WISE MEN IN THEIR BAD HOURS

Wise men in their bad hours have envied
The little people making merry like grasshoppers
In spots of sunlight, hardly thinking
Backward but never forward, and if they somehow
Take hold upon the future they do it
Half asleep, with the tools of generation
Foolishly reduplicating
Folly in thirty-year periods; they eat and laugh too,
Groan against labors, wars and partings,
Dance, talk, dress and undress; wise men have pretended
The summer insects enviable;
One must indulge the wise in moments of mockery.
Strength and desire possess the future,
The breed of the grasshopper shrills, "What does the future
Matter, we shall be dead?" Ah, grasshoppers,
Death's a fierce meadowlark: but to die having made
Something more equal to the centuries
Than muscle and bone, is mostly to shed weakness.
The mountains are dead stone, the people
Admire or hate their stature, their insolent quietness,

The mountains are not softened nor troubled
And a few dead men's thoughts have the same temper.

TOR HOUSE

If you should look for this place after a handful of lifetimes:
Perhaps of my planted forest a few
May stand yet, dark-leaved Australians or the coast cypress, haggard
With storm-drift; but fire and the axe are devils.
Look for foundations of sea-worn granite, my fingers had the art
To make stone love stone, you will find some remnant.
But if you should look in your idleness after ten thousand years:
It is the granite knoll on the granite
And lava tongue in the midst of the bay, by the mouth of the Carmel
River-valley, these four will remain
In the change of names. You will know it by the wild sea-fragrance of wind
Though the ocean may have climbed or retired a little;
You will know it by the valley inland that our sun and our moons were born from
Before the poles changed; and Orion in December
Evenings was strung in the throat of the valley like a lamp-lighted bridge.
Come in the morning, you will see white gulls
Weaving a dance over blue water, the wane of the moon
Their dance-companion, a ghost walking
By daylight, but wider and whiter than any bird in the world.
My ghost you needn't look for; it is probably
Here, but a dark one, deep in the granite, not dancing on wind
With the mad wings and the day moon.

SHINE, PERISHING REPUBLIC

While this America settles in the mould of its vulgarity, heavily thickening to empire,

And protest, only a bubble in the molten mass, pops and sighs
out, and the mass hardens,

I sadly smiling remember that the flower fades to make fruit, the
fruit rots to make earth.
Out of the mother; and through the spring exultances, ripeness
and decadence; and home to the mother.

You making haste haste on decay: not blameworthy; life is
good, be it stubbornly long or suddenly
A mortal splendor: meteors are not needed less than mountains:
shine, perishing republic.

But for my children, I would have them keep their distance
from the thickening center; corruption
Never has been compulsory, when the cities lie at the monster's
feet there are left the mountains.

And boys, be in nothing so moderate as in love of man, a clever
servant, insufferable master.
There is the trap that catches noblest spirits, that caught—they
say—God, when he walked on earth.

T. S. ELIOT (1888-)

PORTRAIT OF A LADY

Thou hast committed—
Fornication: but that was in
another country,
And besides, the wench is dead.

The Jew of Malta.

I

Among the smoke and fog of a December afternoon
You have the scene arrange itself—as it will seem to do—
With "I have saved this afternoon for you";
And four wax candles in the darkened room,

Four rings of light upon the ceiling overhead,
An atmosphere of Juliet's tomb
Prepared for all the things to be said, or left unsaid.
We have been, let us say, to hear the latest Pole
Transmit the Preludes, through his hair and finger-tips.
"So intimate, this Chopin, that I think his soul
Should be resurrected only among friends
Some two or three, who will not touch the bloom
That is rubbed and questioned in the concert room."
—And so the conversation slips
Among velleities and carefully caught regrets
Through attenuated tones of violins
Mingled with remote cornets
And begins.

"You do not know how much they mean to me, my friends,
And how, how rare and strange it is, to find
In a life composed so much, so much of odds and ends,
(For indeed I do not love it . . . you knew? you are not blind!
How keen you are!)
To find a friend who has these qualities,
Who has, and gives
Those qualities upon which friendship lives.
How much it means that I say this to you—
Without these friendships—life, what *cauchemar!*"
Among the windings of the violins
And the ariettes
Of cracked cornets
Inside my brain a dull tom-tom begins
Absurdly hammering a prelude of its own,
Capricious monotone
That is at least one definite "false note."
Let us take the air, in a tobacco trance,
Admire the monuments,
Discuss the late events,
Correct our watches by the public clocks.
Then sit for half an hour and drink our bocks.

II

Now that lilacs are in bloom
She has a bowl of lilacs in her room
And twists one in her fingers while she talks.
"Ah, my friend, you do not know, you do not know
What life is, you who hold it in your hands";
(Slowly twisting the lilac stalks)
"You let it flow from you, you let it flow,
And youth is cruel, and has no remorse
And smiles at situations which it cannot see."
I smile, of course,
And go on drinking tea.
"Yet with these April sunsets, that somehow recall
My buried life, and Paris in the Spring,
I feel immeasurably at peace, and find the world
To be wonderful and youthful, after all."

The voice returns like the insistent out-of-tune
Of a broken violin on an August afternoon:
"I am always sure that you understand
My feelings, always sure that you feel,
Sure that across the gulf you reach your hand.

You are invulnerable, you have no Achilles' heel.
You will go on, and when you have prevailed
You can say: at this point many a one has failed.

But what have I, but what have I, my friend,
To give you, what can you receive from me?
Only the friendship and the sympathy
Of one about to reach her journey's end.

I shall sit here, serving tea to friends. . . ."
I take my hat: how can I make a cowardly amends
For what she has said to me?

You will see me any morning in the park
Reading the comics and the sporting page.
Particularly I remark
An English countess goes upon the stage.
A Greek was murdered at a Polish dance,
Another bank defaulter has confessed.
I keep my countenance,
I remain self-possessed
Except when a street piano, mechanical and tired
Reiterates some worn-out common song
With the smell of hyacinths across the garden
Recalling things that other people have desired.
Are these ideas right or wrong?

III

The October night comes down; returning as before
Except for a slight sensation of being ill at ease
I mount the stairs and turn the handle of the door
And feel as if I had mounted on my hands and knees.

"And so you are going abroad; and when do you return?
But that's a useless question.
You hardly know when you are coming back,
You will find so much to learn."
My smile falls heavily among the bric-à-brac.

"Perhaps you can write to me."
My self-possession flares up for a second;
This is as I had reckoned.
"I have been wondering frequently of late
(But our beginnings never know our ends!)
Why we have not developed into friends."
I feel like one who smiles, and turning shall remark
Suddenly, his expression in a glass.
My self-possession gutters; we are really in the dark.

"For everybody said so, all our friends,
They all were sure our feelings would relate
So closely! I myself can hardly understand.
We must leave it now to fate.
You will write, at any rate.
Perhaps it is not too late.
I shall sit here, serving tea to friends."

And I must borrow every changing shape
To find expression . . . dance, dance
Like a dancing bear,
Cry like a parrot, chatter like an ape.
Let us take the air, in a tobacco trance—
Well! and what if she should die some afternoon,
Afternoon grey and smoky, evening yellow and rose;
Should die and leave me sitting pen in hand
With the smoke coming down above the housetops;
Doubtful, for quite a while
Not knowing what to feel or if I understand
Or whether wise or foolish, tardy or too soon . . .
Would she not have the advantage, after all?
This music is successful with a "dying fall"
Now that we talk of dying—
And should I have the right to smile?

THE HIPPOPOTAMUS

The broad-backed hippopotamus
Rests on his belly in the mud;
Although he seems so firm to us
He is merely flesh and blood.

Flesh-and-blood is weak and frail,
Susceptible to nervous shock;
While the True Church can never fail
For it is based upon a rock.

The hippo's feeble steps may err
In compassing material ends,
While the True Church need never stir
To gather in its dividends.

The 'potamus can never reach
The mango on the mango-tree;
But fruits of pomegranate and peach
Refresh the Church from over sea.

At mating time the hippo's voice
Betrays inflexions hoarse and odd,
But every week we hear rejoice
The Church, at being one with God.

The hippopotamus's day
Is passed in sleep; at night he hunts;
God works in a mysterious way—
The Church can sleep and feed at once.

I saw the 'potamus take wing
Ascending from the damp savannas,
And quiring angels round him sing
The praise of God, in loud hosannas.

Blood of the Lamb shall wash him clean
And him shall heavenly arms enfold,
Among the saints he shall be seen
Performing on a harp of gold.

He shall be washed as white as snow,
By all the martyr'd virgins kist,
While the True Church remains below
Wrapt in the old miasmal mist.

PRELUDES

I

The winter evening settles down
With smell of steaks in passageways.

Six o'clock.
The burnt-out ends of smoky days.
And now a gusty shower wraps
The grimy scraps
Of withered leaves about your feet
And newspapers from vacant lots;
The showers beat
On broken blinds and chimney-pots,
And at the corner of the street
A lonely cab-horse steams and stamps.
And then the lighting of the lamps.

II

The morning comes to consciousness
Of faint stale smells of beer
From the sawdust-trampled street
With all its muddy feet that press
To early coffee-stands.

With the other masquerades
That time resumes,
One thinks of all the hands
That are raising dingy shades
In a thousand furnished rooms.

III

You tossed a blanket from the bed,
You lay upon your back, and waited;
You dozed, and watched the night revealing
The thousand sordid images
Of which your soul was constituted;
They flickered against the ceiling.
And when all the world came back
And the light crept up between the shutters,
And you heard the sparrows in the gutters,
You had such a vision of the street
As the street hardly understands;

Sitting along the bed's edge, where
You curled the papers from your hair,
Or clasped the yellow soles of feet
In the palms of both soiled hands.

IV

His soul stretched tight across the skies
That fade behind a city block,
Or trampled by insistent feet
At four and five and six o'clock;
And short square fingers stuffing pipes,
And evening newspapers, and eyes
Assured of certain certainties,
The conscience of a blackened street
Impatient to assume the world.

I am moved by fancies that are curled
Around these images, and cling:
The notion of some infinitely gentle
Infinitely suffering thing.

Wipe your hand across your mouth, and laugh;
The worlds revolve like ancient women
Gathering fuel in vacant lots.

GERONTION

Thou hast nor youth nor age
But as it were an after dinner sleep
Dreaming of both.

Here I am, an old man in a dry month,
Being read to by a boy, waiting for rain.
I was neither at the hot gates
Nor fought in the warm rain
Nor knee deep in the salt marsh, heaving a cutlass,
Bitten by flies, fought.
My house is a decayed house,

And the jew squats on the window-sill, the owner,
Spawned in some estaminet at Antwerp,
Blistered in Brussels, patched and peeled in London.
The goat coughs at night in the field overhead;
Rocks, moss, stonecrop, iron, merds.
The woman keeps the kitchen, makes tea,
Sneezes at evening, poking the peevish gutter.

I an old man,
A dull head among windy spaces.

Signs are taken for wonders. "We would see a sign":
The word within a word, unable to speak a word,
Swaddled with darkness. In the juvescence of the year
Came Christ the tiger
In depraved May, dogwood and chestnut, flowering judas,
To be eaten, to be divided, to be drunk,
Among whispers; by Mr. Silvero
With caressing hands, at Limoges
Who walked all night in the next room;
By Hakagawa, bowing among the Titians;
By Madame de Tornquist, in the dark room
Shifting the candles; Fräulein von Kulp
Who turned in the hall, one hand on the door.
Vacant shuttles
Weave the wind. I have no ghosts,
An old man in a draughty house
Under a windy knob.

After such knowledge, what forgiveness? Think now
History has many cunning passages, contrived corridors
And issues, deceives with whispering ambitions,
Guides us by vanities. Think now
She gives when our attention is distracted
And what she gives, gives with such supple confusions
That the giving famishes the craving. Gives too late
What's not believed in, or if still believed,
In memory only, reconsidered passion. Gives too soon

Into weak hands, what's thought can be dispensed with
Till the refusal propagates a fear. Think
Neither fear nor courage saves us. Unnatural vices
Are fathered by our heroism. Virtues
Are forced upon us by our impudent crimes.
These tears are shaken from the wrath-bearing tree.

The tiger springs in the new year. Us he devours. Think at last
We have not reached conclusion, when I
Stiffen in a rented house. Think at last
I have not made this show purposelessly
And it is not by any concitation
Of the backward devils.
I would meet you upon this honestly.
I that was near your heart was removed therefrom
To lose beauty in terror, terror in inquisition.
I have lost my passion: why should I need to keep it
Since what is kept must be adulterated?
I have lost my sight, smell, hearing, taste and touch:
How should I use it for your closer contact?

These with a thousand small deliberations
Protract the profit of their chilled delirium,
Excite the membrane, when the sense has cooled,
With pungent sauces, multiply variety
In a wilderness of mirrors. What will the spider do,
Suspend its operations, will the weevil
Delay? De Vailhache, Fresca, Mrs. Cammel, whirled
Beyond the circuit of the shuddering Bear
In fractured atoms. Gull against the wind, in the windy straits
Of Belle Isle, or running on the Horn,
White feathers in the snow, the Gulf claims,
And an old man driven by the Trades
To a sleepy corner.

Tenants of the house,
Thoughts of a dry brain in a dry season.

T. S. Eliot

SALUTATION

(*e vo significando*)

Lady, three white leopards sat under a juniper tree
In the cool of the day, having fed to satiety
On my legs my heart my liver and that which had been contained
In the hollow round of my skull. And God said
Can these bones live? Can these
Bones live? And that which had been contained
In the bones (which were already dry) said chirping:
Because of the goodness of this Lady
And because of her loveliness, and because
She honours the Virgin in meditation,
We shine with brightness. And I who am here dissembled
Proffer my deeds to oblivion, and my love
To the posterity of the desert and the fruit of the gourd.
It is this which recovers
My guts the strings of my eyes and the indigestible portions
Which the leopards reject. The Lady is withdrawn
In a white gown, to contemplation, in a white gown.
Let the whiteness of bones atone to forgetfulness.
There is no life in them. As I am forgotten
And would be forgotten, so I would forget
Thus devoted, concentrated in purpose.—And God said
Prophesy to the wind, to the wind only for only
The wind will listen. And the bones sang chirping
With the burden of the grasshopper, saying

Lady of silences
Calm and distressed
Torn and most whole
Rose of memory
Rose of forgetfulness
Spattered and worshipped
Exhausted and life-giving

Worried reposeful
The single Rose
With worm eaten petals
Is now the Garden
Where all loves end
Terminate torment
Of love unsatisfied
End of the endless
Journey to no end
Conclusion of all that
Is inconclusible
Speech without word and
Word of no speech
Grace to the Mother
For the end of remembering
End of forgetting
For the Garden
Where all love ends

Under a juniper tree the bones sang, scattered and shining.
We are glad to be scattered, we did little good to each other.
Under a tree in the cool of the day, with the blessing of sand.
Forgetting themselves and each other, united
In the quiet of the desert. This is the land which ye
Shall divide by lot. And neither division nor unity
Matter. This is the land. We have our inheritance.

PART EIGHT

DuBOSE HEYWARD (1885-)

THE MOUNTAIN WOMAN

Among the sullen peaks she stood at bay
And paid life's hard account from her small store.
Knowing the code of mountain wives, she bore
The burden of the days without a sigh;
And, sharp against the somber winter sky,
I saw her drive her steers afield each day.

Hers was the hand that sunk the furrows deep
Across the rocky, grudging southern slope.
At first youth left her face, and later hope;
Yet through each mocking spring and barren fall,
She reared her lusty brood, and gave them all
That gladder wives and mothers love to keep.

And when the sheriff shot her eldest son
Beside his still, so well she knew her part,
She gave no healing tears to ease her heart;
But took the blow upstanding, with her eyes
As drear and bitter as the winter skies.
Seeing her then, I thought that she had won.

But yesterday her man returned too soon
And found her tending, with a reverent touch,
One scarlet bloom; and having drunk too much,
He snatched its flame and quenched it in the dirt.
Then, like a creature with a mortal hurt,
She fell, and wept away the afternoon.

JOSEPHINE PINCKNEY

THE MISSES POAR DRIVE TO CHURCH

Out from the tall plantation gate
Issue the Misses Poar in state.
Neatly darned are their black silk mitts,
And straight each stately sister sits.
Their carriage-dresses, brushed and steamed,
Cover their decent limbs; they seemed
No finer, really, before the War
When money was free in the house of Poar.
The negro coachman in beaver hat,
Slightly nibbled by moth and rat,
Smooths his frock-coat of greenish hue,—
But fitting as trim as when it was new—
With which he stiffens his spine of pride
By tightly buttoning himself inside
To drive in this elegant equipage
A yoke of oxen of doubtful age.
(They've had no horses since sixty-four
When the Yankees stopped at the house of Poar.)

The ladies move to the square front pew,
Their Christian meekness in ample view,
And follow the youthful parson's word
With reverence meet for a legate of God
Up to the moment when he prates
Of the President of the United States;
Then, knowing full well that Heaven can't
Expect them to pray for General Grant,
They bury their noses' patrician hook
In dear Great-grand-papa's prayer-book,
Wherein are found urbane petitions
To guard the Crown against seditions
And rest King Charles the Martyr's soul.
Not that they hold King Charles so dear,

Although their blood is Cavalier,
But it suits their piety, on the whole,
Better to pray for the Restoration
Than the overseer of a patch-work nation.

DAVID MORTON (1886-)

FIELDS AT EVENING

They wear their evening light as women wear
Their pale, proud beauty for a lover's sake,
Too quiet-hearted evermore to care
For moving worlds and musics that they make.
And they are hushed as lonely women are,
So lost in dreams they have no thought to mark
How the wide heavens blossom, star by star,
And the slow dusk is deepening to the dark.

The moon comes like a lover from the hill,
Leaning across the twilight and the trees,
And finds them grave and beautiful and still,
And wearing always, on such nights as these,
A glimmer less than any ghostly light,
As women wear their beauty in the night.

ELIZABETH MADOX ROBERTS (1887-)

AUTUMN

Dick and Will and Charles and I
Were playing it was election day,
And I was running for president,
And Dick was a band that was going to play,

And Charles and Will were a street parade,
But Clarence came and said that he
Was going to run for president,
And I could run for school-trustee.

He made some flags for Charles and Will
And a badge to go on Dickie's coat.
He stood some cornstalks by the fence
And had them for the men that vote.

Then he climbed on a box and made a speech
To the cornstalk men that were in a row.
It was all about the dem-o-crats,
And "I de-fy any man to show."

And "I de-fy any man to say."
And all about "It's a big disgrace."
He spoke his speech out very loud
And shook his fist in a cornstalk's face.

A CHILD ASLEEP

I looked for him everywhere
Because I wanted him to play;
And then I found him on his bed
Asleep, but it was day.

His eyes were shut behind the lids—
He couldn't lift them up to see.
And I looked at him very long,
And something in him looked at me.

And he was something like a cat
That is asleep, or like a dog;
Or like a thing that's in the woods
All day behind a log.

And then I was afraid of it,
Of something that was sleeping there.
I didn't even say his name,
But I came down the stair.

Elizabeth Madox Roberts

SHELLS IN ROCK

I've been along the quarry road,
And I have watched men digging wells,
And everywhere it was the same—
The stones were full of little shells.

And they are packed away in rock;
They're under sand and under clay;
And some one said that they were left
When the ocean went away.

I saw them in the stones that make
A church, and in a bridge.
They're hidden in the solid rock
But they show along the edge.

You see them in foundation stones;
They show in creeks and waterfalls;
And once I saw them on the jail—
More little shells in walls.

We walk on them when we walk on roads;
And they're packed under all the hills.
Suppose the sea should come back here
And gather up its shells.

CONRAD AIKEN (1889-)

FROM "PRIAPUS AND THE POOL"

I

When trout swim down Great Ormond Street,
And sea-gulls cry above them lightly,
And hawthorns heave cold flagstones up
To blossom whitely,

Against old walls of houses there,
Gustily shaking out in moonlight
Their country sweetness on sweet air;
And in the sunlight,

By the green margin of that water,
Children dip white feet and shout,
Casting nets in the braided water
To catch the trout:

Then I shall hold my breath and die,
Swearing I never loved you; no,
'You are not lovely!' I shall cry,
'I never loved you so.'

II

This is the shape of the leaf, and this of the flower,
And this the pale bole of the tree
Which watches its bough in a pool of unwavering water
In a land we never shall see.

The thrush on the bough is silent, the dew falls softly,
In the evening is hardly a sound.
And the three beautiful pilgrims who come here together
Touch lightly the dust of the ground,

Touch it with feet that trouble the dust but as wings do,
Come shyly together, are still,
Like dancers who wait, in a pause of the music, for music
The exquisite silence to fill.

This is the thought of the first, and this of the second,
And this the grave thought of the third:
'Linger we thus for a moment, palely expectant,
And silence will end, and the bird

'Sing the pure phrase, sweet phrase, clear phrase in the twilight
To fill the blue bell of the world;
And we, who on music so leaflike have drifted together,
Leaflike apart shall be whirled

'Into what but the beauty of silence, silence forever?' . . .
. . . This is the shape of the tree,
And the flower, and the leaf, and the three pale beautiful pilgrims;
This is what you are to me.

III

See, as the carver carves a rose,
A wing, a toad, a serpent's eye,
In cruel granite, to disclose
The soft things that in hardness lie,

So this one, taking up his heart,
Which time and change had made a stone,
Carved out of it with dolorous art,
Labouring yearlong and alone,

The thing there hidden—rose, toad, wing?
A frog's hand on a lily pad?
Bees in a cobweb—? No such thing!
A girl's head was the thing he had,

Small, shapely, richly crowned with hair,
Drowsy, with eyes half closed, as they
Looked through you and beyond you, clear
To something farther than Cathay:

Saw you, yet counted you not worth
The seeing, thinking all the while
How, flower-like, beauty comes to birth;
And thinking this, began to smile.

Medusa! For she could not see
The world she turned to stone and ash.
Only herself she saw, a tree
That flowered beneath a lightning-flash.

Thus dreamed her face—a lovely thing,
To worship, weep for, or to break.
Better to carve a claw, a wing,
Or, if the heart provide, a snake.

THE WEDDING

At noon, Tithonus, withered by his singing,
Climbing the oatstalk with his hairy legs,
Met grey Arachne, poisoned and shrunk down
By her own beauty; pride had shrivelled both.
In the white web—where seven flies hung wrapped—
She heard his footstep; hurried to him; bound him;
Enshrouded him in silk; then poisoned him.
Twice shrieked Tithonus, feebly; then was still.
Arachne loved him. Did he love Arachne?
She watched him with red eyes, venomous sparks,
And the furred claws outspread . . . "O sweet Tithonus!
Darling! Be kind, and sing that song again!
Shake the bright web again with that deep fiddling!
Are you much poisoned? sleeping? do you dream?
Darling Tithonus!"

And Tithonus, weakly
Moving one hairy shin against the other
Within the silken sack, contrived to fiddle
A little tune, half-hearted: "Shrewd Arachne!
Whom pride in beauty withered to this shape
As pride in singing shrivelled me to mine—
Unwrap me, let me go—and let me limp,
With what poor strength your venom leaves me, down
This oatstalk, and away."

Arachne, angry,
Stung him again, twirling him with rough paws,
The red eyes keen. "What! You would dare to leave me?
Unkind Tithonus! Sooner I'll kill and eat you
Than let you go. But sing that tune again—
So plaintive was it!"

And Tithonus faintly
Moved the poor fiddles, which were growing cold,
And sang: "Arachne, goddess envied of gods,

Beauty's eclipse eclipsed by angry beauty,
Have pity, do not ask the withered heart
To sing too long for you! My strength goes out,
Too late we meet for love. O be content
With friendship, which the noon sun once may kindle
To give one flash of passion, like a dewdrop,
Before it goes! . . . Be reasonable,—Arachne!"

Arachne heard the song grow weaker, dwindle
To first a rustle, and then half a rustle,
And last a tick, so small no ear could hear it
Save hers, a spider's ear. And her small heart,
(Rusted away, like his, to a pinch of dust),
Gleamed once, like his, and died. She clasped him tightly
And sunk her fangs in him. Tithonus dead,
She slept awhile, her last sensation gone;
Woke from the nap, forgetting him; and ate him.

SOUND OF BREAKING

Why do you cry out, why do I like to hear you
Cry out, here in the dewless evening, sitting
Close, close together, so close that the heart stops beating
And the brain its thought? Wordless, worthless mortals
Stumbling, exhausted, in this wilderness
Of our conjoint destruction! Hear the grass
Raging about us! Hear the worms applaud!
Hear how the ripples make a sound of chaos!
Hear now in these and the other sounds of evening,
The first brute step of God!

About your elbow,
Making a ring of thumb and finger, I
Slide the walled blood against the less-walled blood,
Move down your arm, surmount the wrist-bone, shut
Your long slim hand in mine. Each finger-tip
Is then saluted by a finger-tip;

The hands meet back to back, then face to face;
Then lock together. And we, with eyes averted,
Smile at the evening sky of alabaster,
See nothing, lose our souls in the maelstrom, turning
Downward in rapid circles.

Bitter woman,
Bitter of heart and brain and blood, bitter as I
Who drink your bitterness—can this be beauty?
Do you cry out because the beauty is cruel?
Terror, because we downward sweep so swiftly?
Terror of darkness?

It is a sound of breaking,
The world is breaking, the world is a sound of breaking,
Many-harmonied, diverse, profound,
A shattering beauty. See, how together we break,
Hear what a crashing of disordered chords and discords
Fills the world with falling, when we thus lean
Our two mad bodies together!

It is a sound
Of everlasting grief, the sound of weeping,
The sound of disaster and misery, the sound
Of passionate heartbreak at the centre of the world.

JOHN CROWE RANSOM (1888-)

JANET WAKING

Beautifully Janet slept
Till it was deeply morning. She woke then
And thought about her dainty-feathered hen,
To see how it had kept.

One kiss she gave her mother,
Only a small one gave she to her daddy
Who would have kissed each curl of his shining baby;
No kiss at all for her brother.

"Old Chucky, Old Chucky!" she cried,
Running on little pink feet upon the grass
To Chucky's house, and listening. But alas,
Her Chucky had died.

It was a transmogrifying bee
Came droning down on Chucky's old bald head
And sat and pur the poison. It scarcely bled,
But how exceedingly

And purply did the knot
Swell with the venom and communicate
Its rigour! Now the poor comb stood up straight
But Chucky did not.

So there was Janet
Kneeling on the wet grass, crying her brown hen
(Translated far beyond the daughters of men)
To rise and walk upon it.

And weeping fast as she had breath
Janet implored us, "Wake her from her sleep!"
And would not be instructed in how deep
Was the forgetful kingdom of death.

AMPHIBIOUS CROCODILE

In due season the amphibious crocodile
Rose from the waves and clambered on the bank
And clothed himself, having cleansed his toes which stank
Of bayous of Florida and estuaries of Nile.

And if he had had not water on his brain,
Remember what joys were his. The complete landlubber
In a green mackintosh and overshoes of rubber—
Putting his umbrella up against the rain

For fear of the influenza—sleeking his curls—
Visiting the punchbowl to the verge of hiccups—
Prowling among the petticoats and the teacups—
Breaching his promises and playing with the girls.

At length in grey spats he must cross the ocean.
So this is Paris? Lafayette, we are here.
Bring us sweet wines but none of your French beer.
And he weeps on Notre Dame with proper emotion.

This is the Rive Gauche, this is the Hotel Crillon.
Where are the brave poilus? They are slain by his French.
And suddenly he cries, I want to see a trench!
Up in the North eventually he finds one

Which is all green slime and water; whereupon lewd
Nostalgic tremors assail him; with strangled oaths
He flees; he would be kicking off his clothes
And reverting to his pre-Christian mother's nude.

Next on the grand tour is Westminster, and Fleet Street.
His Embassy must present him to King George.
Who is the gentleman whose teeth are so large?
That is Mr. Crocodile the renowned æsthete.

To know England really one must try the country
And the week-end parties; he is persuaded to straddle
A yellow beast in a red coat on a flat saddle.
Much too gymnastical are the English gentry.

Surely a Scotch and soda with the Balliol men.
But when old Crocodile rises to speak at the Union
He is too miserably conscious of his bunion
And toes too large for the æsthetic regimen.

It is too too possible he has wandered far
From the simple center of his rugged nature.
I wonder, says he, if I am the sort of creature
To live by travel, projects, affaires de cœur? . . .

John Crowe Ransom

Soberly Crocodile sips of the Eucharist.
But as he meditates the obscene complexes
And infinite involutions of the sexes,
Crocodile sets up for a psychoanalyst.

Great is his learning. He learns to discuss
Pure being, both the Who's Who and the What's What,
Affirms that A is A, refutes that B is not.
This is a clean life without mud and muss.

But who would ever have thought it took such strength
To whittle the tree of being to a point
While the deep-sea urge cries Largo, and every joint
Tingles with gross desire of lying at length?

Of all the elements mixed in Crocodile
Water is principal; but water flows
By paths of least resistance; and water goes
Down, down, down; which is too infantile.

The earth spins from its poles and is glared on
By the fierce incessant suns, but here is news
For a note in the fine-print of the Thursday Reviews:
Old Robert Crocodile is packed up and gone.

His dear friends cannot find him. The ladies write
As usual but their lavender notes are returned
By the U. S. Postmaster and secretively burned.
He has successfully got out of sight.

Crocodile hangs his pretty clothes on a limb
And lies with his fathers, and with his mothers too,
And his brothers and sisters as it seems right to do;
The family religion is good enough for him.

Full length he lies and goes as water goes,
He weeps for joy and welters in the flood,
Floating he lies extended many a rood,
And quite invisible but for the end of his nose.

THE EQUILIBRISTS

Full of her long white arms and milky skin
He had a thousand times remembered sin.
Alone in the press of people travelled he,
Minding her jacinth and myrrh and ivory.

Mouth he remembered: the quaint orifice
From which came heat that flamed upon the kiss,
Till cold words came down spiral from the head,
Grey doves from the officious tower illsped.

Body—it was a white field ready for love.
On her body's field, with the gaunt tower above,
The lilies grew, beseeching him to take,
If he would pluck and wear them, bruise and break.

Eyes talking: Never mind the cruel words,
Embrace my flowers but not embrace the swords.
But what they said, the doves came straightway flying
And unsaid: Honor, Honor, they came crying.

Importunate her doves. Too pure, too wise,
Clambering on his shoulder, saying, Arise,
Leave me now, and never let us meet,
Eternal distance now command thy feet.

Predicament indeed, which thus discovers
Honor among thieves, Honor between lovers.
O such a little word is Honor, they feel!
But the grey word is between them cold as steel.

At length I saw these lovers fully were come
Into their torture of equilibrium:
Dreadfully had forsworn each other, and yet
They were bound each to each, and they did not forget.

And rigid as two painful stars, and twirled
About the clustered night their prison world,

They burned with fierce love always to come near,
But Honor beat them back and kept them clear.

Ah, the strict lovers, they are ruined now!
I cried in anger. But with puddled brow
Devising for those gibbeted and brave
Came I descanting: Man, what would you have?

For spin your period out, and draw your breath,
A kinder sæculum begins with Death.
Would you ascend to Heaven and bodiless dwell?
Or take your bodies honorless to Hell?

In Heaven you have heard no marriage is,
No white flesh tinder to your lecheries,
Your male and female tissue sweetly shaped
Sublimed away, and furious blood escaped.

Great lovers lie in Hell, the stubborn ones
Infatuate of the flesh upon the bones;
Stuprate, they rend each other when they kiss;
The pieces kiss again—no end to this.

But still I watched them spinning, orbited nice.
Their flames were not more radiant than their ice.
I dug in the quiet earth and wrought the tomb
And made these lines to memorize their doom:—

Equilibrists lie here; stranger, tread light;
Close, but untouching in each other's sight;
Mouldered the lips and ashy the tall skull,
Let them lie perilous and beautiful.

HERE LIES A LADY

Here lies a lady of beauty and high degree.
Of chills and fever she died, of fever and chills,
The delight of her husband, her aunts, an infant of three,
And of medicos marvelling sweetly on her ills.

For either she burned, and her confident eyes would blaze,
And her fingers fly in a manner to puzzle their heads—
What was she making? Why, nothing; she sat in a maze
Of old scraps of laces, snipped into curious shreds—

Or this would pass, and the light of her fire decline
Till she lay discouraged and cold as a thin stalk white and blown,
And would not open her eyes, to kisses, to wine;
The sixth of these states was her last; the cold settled down.

Sweet ladies, long may ye bloom, and toughly I hope ye may thole,
But was she not lucky? In flowers and lace and mourning,
In love and great honour we bade God rest her soul
After six little spaces of chill, and six of burning.

PARTING AT DAWN

If there was a broken whispering by night,
It was an image of the coward heart,
But the white dawn assures them how to part—
Stoics are born on the cold glitter of light,
And with the morning star lovers take flight.
Say, then, your partings; and most dry should you drain
Your lips of their wine, your eyes of the frantic rain,
Till these be as the barren Cenobite.

And then? O dear Sir, stumbling down the street,
Continue, till you come to wars and wounds;
Beat the air, Madam, till your house-clock sounds;
And if no Lethe flows beneath your casement,
And when ten years have brought no full effacement,
Philosophy was wrong, and you may meet.

DONALD DAVIDSON (1893-)

THE WOLF

The flour-barrels, cracker-boxes, cans
Of lard and coffee hem the live beast in,
Who jingles furtive fingers through the till,
Dropping delicious coins with snap and grin.

Drooling, like one who should be crunching bones,
He mouths the figured column of his kill.
A sneaking blast rattles the locked door;
The cat looks on, oracular and still.

The eyes that should be centering the brush
Blink at the hot stove's belly, glowing red.
The breath that should go howling to the moon
Blows out the lamp and wheezes off to bed.

CARL CARMER (1893-)

BLACK BOY

Mark Lee was born a month before M. L.;
M. L. was named for him as nigger boys
Are often christened out of compliment
To white folks' boys who live in the Big House,
And M. L.'s daddy got a present for it.

Well, from the time that those two boys could walk
They were together always, rain or shine;
That's why we had to call the one M. L.—
To tell which boy we meant. A funny pair
They looked, for while Mark Lee was blond and pale,
M. L. was satin-black—except his teeth,
Snow-white and 'most as big as daisy petals.

I knew them first when I was a small girl:
Sometimes I used to see them playing horse,
And M. L. always was the prancing steed
While Mark Lee drove, with many rousing oaths:
But all his words and flicks of his birch whip
Just stretched M. L.'s wide grin a little wider.

One day I saw a big boy hit Mark Lee,
He hit him hard, but Mark Lee didn't wince—
He stepped aside, turned round, and said quite low,
"Hit him, M. L.," and M. L., smiling, hit,
And the boy began to cry and ran away.

Mark Lee and I were fifth-grade pupils once
(Though I was younger, he was slow to learn),
And one examination day in spring
I saw him sitting by the open window
And frowning at the questions on the board.
Then, as I looked, I saw him pass his slate
Outside and saw a yellow hand reach up
From underneath the window, snatch the slate,
And vanish. Soon it came back up again,
And teacher came and got it, and she said,
"Mark Lee, you're doing better, and I'm glad."

A few years later on an April day
Worth Dunn, a little red-haired friend, and I
Were eating ice-cream at the corner store
When, unbeknownst, Mark Lee crept softly up
And clipped an auburn curl from Worth's bright head.
She turned upon him and began to scold
As only red-heads can—she stamped her foot—
Her temper filled her mouth with scorching words.
Mark Lee stood still a moment; then he called
"M. L.," and M. L. came and took his master's place,
Stood grinning under Worth's high-voiced abuse
While Mark Lee strolled on down the shady street.

The last time that I saw the two of them
Mark Lee lay in his bed in the Big House,
His face chalk-white beneath his yellow curls.
M. L. sat by him there, alone and still,
Blacker than coal beside the tumbled sheets,
And neither boy looked up as I walked in;
Their eyes were fixed upon each other now.
M. L.'s broad grin was saying as before,
"Step back, white boy, and let me take your place,"
But the blue eyes held a stricken, staring look,
A look of puzzlement and wild despair,
For poor Mark Lee at last had come upon
One thing that M. L. couldn't do for him.

ALLEN TATE (1899-)

IDIOT

The idiot greens the meadow with his eyes,
The meadow creeps, implacable and still.
A dog barks; the hammock swings; he lies.
One, two, three, the cows bulge on the hill.

Motion, which is not time, erects snowdrifts,
While sister's hands sieve waterfalls of lace!
With a palm fan closer than death, he lifts
The Ozarks and tilted seas across his face. . . .

In the long sunset where impatient sound
Strips niggers to a multiple of backs,
Flies yield their heat, magnolias drench the ground
With Appomattox! The shadows lie in stacks.

The julep glass weaves echoes in Jim's kinks
While ashy Jim puts murmurs in the day:
Now in the idiot's heart a chamber stinks
Of dead asters—as the potter's field, of May.

All evening the marsh is a slick pool
Where dream wild hares, witch hazel, pretty girls.
"Up from the important picnic of a fool—
Those rotted asters!" Eddy on eddy swirls

The innocent mansion of a panther's heart!
It crumbles; tick-tick, time drags it on;
And now his arteries lag, and now they start
Reverence with the frigid gusts of sin.

The stillness pelts the eye, assaults the hair;
A beech sticks out a branch to warn the stars;
A lightning-bug jerks angles in the air,
Diving. "I am the captain of new wars!"

The dusk runs down the lane, driven like hail;
Far off, a precise whistle is escheat
To the dark; and then the towering weak and pale
Covers his eyes with memory like a sheet.

ROBERT PENN WARREN ( )

THE WRESTLING MATCH

"Here in this corner, ladies and gentlemen,
I now presents 'Mug' Hill, weight two-hundred-ten,
Who will wrestle here tonight the 'Battling Pole,'
Boruff"—who, as insistently the stale

Loud voice behind asserts, is good as hell.
"Is good as hell, I says." And then the bell
Stabs up to life two engines of flesh and bone,
Each like a great and bronze automaton

That by black magic moves tremendously,
Moving with a machine's intensity
To some obscure and terrible conclusion
Involving us, as in an absurd vision

The truculent dull spirit is involved
There to contend above while is dissolved
In sleep the twisted body on the bed.
The barker said—or was it this he said:

"Ladies and gentlemen, I now present,"
(The voice here sank in some obscene intent)
"That which is body, so you all may see
The bone and blood and sweat and agony,

"The thews that through the tortured years have striven
To breach the flesh so sure to spill when broken,
The only breath, a cry, and the dark blood
That forever we would keep if but we could."

CRŒSUS IN AUTUMN

If the distrait verdure cleave not to the branch
Less powerfully than flesh to the fervent bone,
Should then gruff Crœsus on the village bench
Lament the absolute gold of summer gone?

Though this gray guy be no Aurelius
Surveying the ilex and the latin vine
He might consider a little piteous
The green and fatal tribe's decline;

But in Kentucky against a dwindling sun
The riven red-oak and the thick sweet-gum
Yet hold the northward hills whose final stone
In dark ogive supports the fractured loam.

The seasons down our country have a way
To stir the bald and metaphysic skull,
Fuddling the stout cortex so mortally
That it cries no more, Proud heart be still, be still.

I bring you but this broken metaphor,
So haul your careful carcass home, old fellow,
More Roman than the doddering emperor
Now green is blown and every gold gone sallow.

GRANDFATHER GABRIEL

Grandfather Gabriel rode up to town
In black French broadcloth, his hat-brim down,
A gold ring to his finger, hair on his chest,
So he rallied and whored and ginned with the best—
O an elegant son-of-a-bitch, I guess,
Whose boots and bones have fed the elegant grass.

Grandfather Gabriel rode from town
With Grandmother Martha in a white wedding gown.
Wine-yellow was sunshine then on the corn;
But swollen ran the river, the hills were brown
And wind in the east when a son was born.
"A fine little bastard," Gabriel said,
But Martha lay in a strict high bed,
No breath to her body or trouble in her head.

Gabriel, Gabriel, if now together
With Martha you keep any sort of weather
In fragrant hair and dissolute bone adrowse,
Your grandson keeps a broken house.
There's a stitch in his side no plasters heal,
A crack in the firmament, maggots in the meal;
There's a mole in the garden, fennel by the gate,
In his heart a curse hell-black as hate
For that other young guy who died too late.

MERRILL MOORE (1903-)

THE FLIES

Death came to him so quickly that the flies
In the room were unaware that he was dead,
Which is usually not the case.
They avoided his head
Strangely enough and did not light on his eyes
At all as flies are very apt to do
When the blood stops to rest and the brittle ribs stop heaving
And the heat goes off while the last breath is leaving
And the work of the lungs and the brain is finally through.

They continued describing circles in the air
Using the light globe to describe a radius,
But toward dusk this must have become tedious
To them, judging from the deliberate care
With which they took it on themselves to stop
And rest for the night over the mantel-top.

O MAD SPRING, ONE WAITS

O mad spring that taught the silent grass
To die for winter, spring that taught the sun
Its quick commandments, winds of spring that run
Before the months of summer, O mad spring
That forces icicle and frost to pass,
That taught the savage trees to stand and call
With a green cry that echoes until fall,

Spring that does not heed the signalling
Colors of my desire, O spring, one waits
And envies seasons and their certain fates,
Drawing pitiless and tiring breath,
Watching shadows from the sun of death
Darken as its light pales, one still stands
Pressed by fear and hunger on both hands.

SCIENTIA VINCIT OMNIA?

Salts were formed by acids combined with bases
Under proper conditions, that was easy to see.

He was acid, also easy, but she . . .
A weak base only to be used in certain cases
To unite with an acid that was rather weak?

He was not sure. It seemed as though she was
But he was never sure of it because
He never could quite bring himself to speak.

So laboratory—laboratory—laboratory—
On it went, three days out of six,
Chemicals here, chemicals there,—do they mix?

The ancient characters acting the ancient story,
And just as sure as young birds learn to sing,
Love in a test-tube he knew was a dangerous thing.

CARY ROSS (1904-)

SONNET ON A SOMEWHAT INFERIOR RADIO OUTFIT

What's the point of having your radio set set
For such very infrequent frequencies;
The one across the street has no delinquencies.
It gets Seattle-London-Palm Beach-Grand
Rapids—etc. They heard the band
In Washington for the Ku Klux parade,
And Dayton, Tennessee, when Bryan prayed
So long, yes, just as clear, and the Sextette

From "Lucia" at the Metropolitan.
They get the prize fights and the foot-ball scores
Along with everything else. Why, with yours
You'll never get real cosmopolitan.

Cary Ross

You act like you were kind of disappoint-
Ed god doesn't broadcast. There isn't any point—

GEORGE DILLON (1906-)

ELEMENTAL

What roar the seas would make that lie
Level in their prodigious dish
Of earth if they should spill in sky
Is common knowledge to the fish.

He glides unharassed. No alarm
Assails his proper sense, for it
Is privy to that secret storm
Of thunders throttled in a pit.

But since abundant bubbles break
Upon his flinching fins in pain
An atmosphere of wind would make
Sheer torment through his narrow brain.

For this despise him not at all.
He does not need for being brave
The way of the intrepid gull
Whose wing eludes the lifted wave.

THE HARD LOVERS

Now austere lips are laid
Sternly on lips: implicit
In each bold body, dread
Of the outrageous visit.

As wind in a tall tide
Flooding the frantic trees,
Love, long withheld by pride,
Breaks coldly over these.

Their heritage is peace;
They root in a strong languor:
Like wind-assaulted trees
They bend in terrible anger.

They coldly clash: if either
Yields any tenderness
It is that they together
Share deeply one distress.

PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR
(1872-1906)

ACCOUNTABILITY

Folks ain't got no right to censuah othah folks about dey habits;
Him dat giv' de squir'ls de bushtails made de bobtails fu' de rabbits.
Him dat built de gread big mountains hollered out de little valleys,
Him dat made de streets an' driveways wasn't shamed to make de alleys.

We is all constructed diff'ent, d'ain't no two of us de same;
We cain't h'ep ouah likes an' dislikes, ef we're bad we ain't to blame.
Ef we'se good, we needn't show off, case you bet it ain't ouah doin'
We gits into su'ttain channels dat we jes' cain't he'p pu'suin'.

But we all fits into places dat no othah ones could fill,
An' we does the things we has to, big er little, good er ill.
John cain't tek de place o' Henry, Su an' Sally ain't alike;
Bass ain't nuthin' like a suckah, chub ain't nuthin' like a pike.

When you come to think about it, how it's all planned out it's splendid.
Nuthin's done er evah happens, 'dout hit's somefin dat's intended;

Don't keer what you does, you has to, an' it sholy beats de dickens,—
Viney, go put on de kittle, I got one o' mastah's chickens.

JAMES WELDON JOHNSON
(1871-)

GO DOWN DEATH

(*A Funeral Sermon*)

Weep not, weep not,
She is not dead;
She's resting in the bosom of Jesus.
Heart-broken husband—weep no more;
Grief-stricken son—weep no more;
Left-lonesome daughter—weep no more;
She's only just gone home.

Day before yesterday morning,
God was looking down from his great, high heaven,
Looking down on all his children,
And his eye fell on Sister Caroline,
Tossing on her bed of pain.
And God's big heart was touched with pity,
With the everlasting pity.

And God sat back on his throne,
And he commanded that tall, bright angel standing at his right hand:
Call me Death!
And that tall, bright angel cried in a voice
That broke like a clap of thunder:
Call Death!—Call Death!
And the echo sounded down the streets of heaven
Till it reached away back to that shadowy place,
Where Death waits with his pale, white horses.

And Death heard the summons,
And he leaped on his fastest horse,
Pale as a sheet in the moonlight.
Up the golden street Death galloped,
And the hoofs of his horse struck fire from the gold,
But they didn't make no sound.
Up Death rode to the Great White Throne,
And waited for God's command.

And God said: Go down, Death, go down,
Go down to Savannah, Georgia,
Down in Yamacraw,
And find Sister Caroline.
She's borne the burden and the heat of the day,
She's labored long in my vineyard,
And she's tired—
She's weary—
Go down, Death, and bring her to me.

And Death didn't say a word,
But he loosed the reins on his pale, white horse,
And he clamped the spurs to his bloodless sides,
And out and down he rode,
Through heaven's pearly gates,
Past suns and moons and stars;
On Death rode,
Leaving the lightning's flash behind;
Straight on down he came.

While we were watching round her bed,
She turned her eyes and looked away,
She saw what we couldn't see;
She saw Old Death. She saw Old Death,
Coming like a falling star.
But Death didn't frighten Sister Caroline;
He looked to her like a welcome friend.
And she whispered to us: I'm going home,
And she smiled and closed her eyes.

And Death took her up like a baby,
And she lay in his icy arms,
But she didn't feel no chill.
And Death began to ride again—
Up beyond the evening star,
Out beyond the morning star,
Into the glittering light of glory,
On to the Great White Throne.
And there he laid Sister Caroline
On the loving breast of Jesus.

And Jesus took his own hand and wiped away her tears,
And he smoothed the furrows from her face,
And the angels sang a little song,
And Jesus rocked her in his arms,
And kept a-saying: Take your rest,
Take your rest, take your rest.
Weep not—weep not,
She is not dead;
She's resting in the bosom of Jesus.

FENTON JOHNSON (1888-)

THE BANJO PLAYER

There is music in me, the music of a peasant people.

I wander through the levee, picking my banjo and singing my songs of the cabin and the field. At the Last Chance Saloon I am as welcome as the violets in March; there is always food and drink for me there, and the dimes of those who love honest music. Behind the railroad tracks the little children clap their hands and love me as they love Kris Kringle.

But I fear that I am a failure. Last night a woman called me a troubadour. What is a troubadour?

THE DRUNKARD

I had a wife, but she is gone. She left me a week ago. God bless her!

I married another in the rear of Mike's saloon. It was a gallon jug of the reddest liquor that ever burned the throat of man. I will be true to my new wife. You can have the other.

THE MINISTER

I mastered pastoral theology, the Greek of the Apostles, and all the difficult subjects in a minister's curriculum.

I was as learned as any in this country when the Bishop ordained me.

And I went to preside over Mount Moriah, largest flock in the Conference.

I preached the Word as I felt it, I visited the sick and dying and comforted the afflicted in spirit.

I loved my work because I loved my God.

But I lost my charge to Sam Jenkins, who has not been to school four years in his life.

I lost my charge because I could not make my congregation shout.

And my dollar money was small, very small.

Sam Jenkins can tear a Bible to tatters and his congregation destroys the pews with their shouting and stamping.

Sam Jenkins leads in the gift of raising dollar money.

Such is religion.

CLAUDE McKAY (1889-)

AMERICA

Although she feeds me bread of bitterness,
And sinks into my throat her tiger's tooth,
Stealing my breath of life, I will confess
I love this cultured hell that tests my youth.

Her vigor flows like tides into my blood,
Giving me strength against her hate,
Her bigness sweeps my being like a flood.
Yet, as a rebel fronts a king in state,
I stand within her walls with not a shred
Of terror, malice, not a word of jeer.
Darkly I gaze into the days ahead,
And see her might and granite wonders there,
Beneath the touch of Time's unerring hand,
Like priceless treasures sinking in the sand.

JEAN TOOMER (1894-)

GEORGIA DUSK

The sky, lazily disdaining to pursue
The setting sun, too indolent to hold
A lengthened tournament for flashing gold,
Passively darkens for night's barbecue.

A feast of moon and men and barking hounds,
An orgy for some genius of the South
With blood-hot eyes and cane-lipped scented mouth,
Surprised in making folk-songs from soul sounds.

The sawmill blows its whistle, buzz-saws stop,
And silence breaks the bud of knoll and hill,
Soft settling pollen where plowed lands fulfill
Their early promise of bumper crop.

Smoke from the pyramidal sawdust pile
Curls up, blue ghosts of trees, tarrying low
Where only chips and stumps are left to show
The solid proof of former domicile.

Meanwhile, the men, with vestiges of pomp,
Race memories of king and caravan,
High-priests, an ostrich, and a juju-man,
Go singing through the footpaths of the swamp.

Their voices rise . . . the pine trees are guitars,
Strumming, pine-needles fall like sheets of rain . . .
Their voices rise . . . the chorus of the cane
Is caroling a vesper to the stars . . .

O singers, resinous and soft your songs
Above the sacred whisper of the pines,
Give virgin lips to cornfield concubines,
Bring dreams of Christ to dusky cane-lipped throngs.

LANGSTON HUGHES (1902-)

TO MIDNIGHT NAN AT LEROY'S

Strut and wiggle,
Shameless gal.
Wouldn't no good fellow
Be your pal.

Hear dat music. . . .
Jungle night.
Hear dat music. . . .
And the moon was white.

Sing your Blues song,
Pretty baby.
You want lovin'
And you don't mean maybe.

Jungle lover. . . .
Night black boy. . . .
Two against the moon
And the moon was joy.

Strut and wiggle,
Shameless Nan.
Wouldn't no good fellow
Be your man.

CROSS

My old man's a white old man
And my old mother's black.
If ever I cursed my white old man
I take my curses back.

If ever I cursed my black old mother
And wished she were in hell,
I'm sorry for that evil wish
And now I wish her well.

My old man died in a fine big house.
My ma died in a shack.
I wonder where I'm gonna die,
Being neither white nor black?

COUNTEE CULLEN (1903-)

YET DO I MARVEL

I doubt not God is good, well-meaning, kind,
And did He stoop to quibble could tell why
The little buried mole continues blind,
Why flesh that mirrors Him must some day die,
Make plain the reason tortured Tantalus
Is baited by the fickle fruit, declare
If merely brute caprice dooms Sisyphus
To struggle up a never-ending stair.
Inscrutable His ways are, and immune
To catechism by a mind too strewn
With petty cares to slightly understand
What awful brain compels His awful hand.
Yet do I marvel at this curious thing:
To make a poet black, and bid him sing!

PART NINE

ARCHIBALD MacLEISH (1892-)

YOU, ANDREW MARVELL

And here face down beneath the sun,
And here upon earth's noonward height,
To feel the always coming on,
The always rising of the night.

To feel creep up the curving east
The earthly chill of dusk and slow
Upon those under lands the vast
And ever-climbing shadow grow,

And strange at Ecbatan the trees
Take leaf by leaf the evening, strange,
The flooding dark about their knees,
The mountains over Persia change,

And now at Kermanshah the gate,
Dark, empty, and the withered grass,
And through the twilight now the late
Few travelers in the westward pass,

And Baghdad darken and the bridge
Across the silent river gone,
And through Arabia the edge
Of evening widen and steal on,

And deepen on Palmyra's street
The wheel rut in the ruined stone,
And Lebanon fade out and Crete
High through the clouds and over blown,

And over Sicily the air
Still flashing with the landward gulls,
And loom and slowly disappear
The sails above the shadowy hulls,

And Spain go under and the shore
Of Africa, the gilden sand,
And evening vanish and no more
The low pale light across that land,

Nor now the long light on the sea—

And here face downward in the sun
To feel how swift, how secretly,
The shadow of the night comes on. . . .

FROM "THE HAMLET OF A. MAC LEISH"

Night after night I lie like this listening.
Night after night I can not sleep. I wake
Knowing something, thinking something has happened.
I have this feeling a great deal. I have
Sadness often. At night I have this feeling.
Waking I feel this pain as though I knew
Something not to be thought of, something unbearable.
I feel this pain at night as though some
Terrible thing had happened. At night the sky
Opens, the near things vanish, the bright walls
Fall, and the stars were always there, and the dark
There and the cold and the stillness. I wake and stand
A long time by the window. I always think
The trees know the way they are silent. I always
Think some one has spoken, some one has told me.
Reading the books I always think so, reading
Words overheard in the books, reading the words
Like words in a strange language. I always hear
Music like that. I almost remember with music. . . .

This is not what you think. It is not that. I swim
Every day at the beach under the fig tree.
I swim very well and far out. The smell
Of pine comes over the water. The wind blurs
Seaward. And afternoons I walk to the phare.
Much of the time I do not think anything;
Much of the time I do not even notice.
And then, speaking, closing a door, I see
Strangely as though I almost saw now, some
Shape of things I have always seen, the sun
White on a house and the windows open and swallows
In and out of the wallpaper, the moon's face
Faint by day in a mirror; I see some
Changed thing that is telling, something that almost
Tells—and this pain then, then this pain. And no
Words, only these shapes of things that seem
Ways of knowing what it is I am knowing.
I write these things in books, on pieces of paper.
I have written 'The wind rises . . .' I have written 'Bells
Plunged in the wind. . . .' I have written 'Like
Doors . . .' 'Like evening . . .'
It is always the same: I cannot read what the words say.
It is always the same: there are signs and I cannot read them.
There are empty streets and the blinds drawn and the sky
Sliding in windows. There are lights before
Dawn in the yellow transoms over the doors.
There are steps that pass and pass all night that are always
One, always the same step passing. . . .
I have travelled a great deal. I have seen at Hmos
The cranes over the river and Isfahan
The fallen tiles in the empty garden, and Shiraz
Far off, the cypresses under the hill.
It is always the same. I have seen on the Kazvin road
On the moon grey desert the leafless wind,
The wind raging in moon-dusk. I have seen a light come
Seaward with slow oars from the mouth of Euphrates.
I have heard the nightingales in the thickets of Gilan,

And at dawn, at Teheran, I have heard from the ancient
Westward greying face of the wandering planet
The voices calling the small new name of god,
The voices answered with cock-crow, answered at dusk
With the cry of jackals far away in the gardens.
I have heard the name of the moon beyond those mountains.
It is always the same. It is always as though some
Smell of leaves had made me not quite remember;
As though I had turned to look and there were no one.
It has always been secret like that with me.
Always something has not been said. Always
The stones were there, the trees were there, the motionless
Hills have appeared in the dusk to me, the moon
Has stood a long time white and still in the window.
Always the earth has been turned away from me hiding
The veiled eyes and the wind in the leaves has not spoken . . .

As now the night is still. As the night now
Stands at the farthest off of touch and like
A raised hand held upon the empty air
Means and is silent
Look! It waves me still . . .
I say Go on! Go on!
As the whole night now
Made visible behind this darkness seems
To beckon to me. . . .

ROBERT P. TRISTRAM COFFIN
(1892-)

THE RAM

A white ram rears against a wall
With horns curled close in scorn.
The wall stands firm; yet he must butt,
For that end he was born.

Beyond there are unnibbled fields
  And sheep that ean for young.
Like a hammer forging steel
  His head is reared and swung.

The rhythm of that beating head
  Is built into our hearts
And into the volcanic sun's
  Incandescent darts.

The passion of those bleeding horns
  Is on each star that glows
And on the briefest petallings
  Of a Summer rose.

You Ram who shape the universe
  And Lord who bleed to death,
Your hunger is our being fed,
  Your dying is our breath!

SAMUEL HOFFENSTEIN (1890-)

CLOUD

The cloud assumes fantastic shapes
Of beasts and continents and capes;
Of island, mountain, monolith,
And hybrid fauna out of myth.
I've seen the knights of Arthur's court
Themselves among its towers disport;
The silver griffon charge the sun,
And once, a gold Napoleon.

Alas, that hot ambition leaps
The steed that walks, the man who creeps,
And girt for conquest of the sky,
Conspires with creatures born to die!

The turret thins; the dream is done;
A breeze dissolves Napoleon;
The griffon curls his pale remains
Round Arthur's court, while Arthur rains.

Myself have charged the hilly morn
A metaphoric unicorn;
Have hung upon my airy heart
A hybrid bard and Bonaparte;
Have stormed in fabled length and flight
The lunar headlands of delight,
And laid fantastic paws along
The foam-edge of the isles of song.

And yet there died upon the sky
A sun-struck vapor that was I,
And left no mark of myth or man
Or bard or quasi-Corsican.
Desirous cloud, we are too wan
For day or night to build upon,
And all our dream of happiness
Goes up in steam, comes down in less!

SHEEP

Nibble, nibble, little sheep,
In the meadow, on the steep;
Keep your nozzle in the grass
And let the Kingdom come to pass.

All the money in the mint,
All the news that's fit to print
Is but grass upon the steep
For another kind of sheep.

You have ticks and fleas, I know;
They have *sum* and *cogito;*
You are prey to simple bites;
They have transatlantic flights.

Samuel Hoffenstein

Happy, happy, little sheep,
You have but to eat and sleep;
Even when you ruminate
Saint Peter dozes by the gate.

They have radio, submarines,
Complexes and endocrines,
Television, taxes, rent,
Faith and hope and six per cent.

You are casual with your kind;
They have organized a mind;
You are mated for a goal;
They have libido and soul.

You are sexed for simple use;
They have let their women loose;
Earth remembers you and yields
Milk of her mammalian fields.

There is but a line between
You and your nutritious green,
But to get their grass they must
Scrabble riddles in the dust;

Scrabble riddles on their brain,
Make a plow of wind and rain,
Bury stars and pile up stone,
Bind their hearts and yoke their own.

When the shearer's work is done
Yours the pasture and the sun;
But for them the unborn years
Are but whetstones for the shears.

You see what your eyes command—
Cloud and clover, lake and land,
But their sight must lag behind
The laboring oxen of the mind.

Nibble, nibble, little sheep,
In the meadow, on the steep;
When the Kingdom comes to pass,
Its tents and trumpets will be grass.

DOROTHY PARKER (1893-

INVENTORY

Four be the things I am wiser to know:
Idleness, sorrow, a friend, and a foe.

Four be the things I'd been better without:
Love, curiosity, freckles, and doubt.

Three be the things I shall never attain:
Envy, content, and sufficient champagne.

Three be the things I shall have till I die:
Laughter and hope and a sock in the eye.

JOHN V. A. WEAVER (1893-

NOCTURNE

"Nothin' or everythin', it's got to be,"
You says, and hides your face down on my arm.
"If it meant nothin', 'twouldn't do no harm,
Or either everythin'—but this way—see? . . ."

I feel your tremblin' heart against my coat,
And the big arc-light moon grins down so cool,
"Go on!" I think it says, "you softie fool!"
I love you so it hurts me in my throat. . . .

"Don't make me kiss you; sure, I know you could,"
You're pleadin', "And we gone too far for play;
I care a lot . . . but yet not so's to say
I love you yet. . . . Aw, help me to be good!" . . .

John V. A. Weaver

Oh, darlin', darlin', can't you let it be
Nothin' to you, and everythin' to me?

CARLTON TALBOTT (1892-

BALLYHOO FOR A MENDICANT

Listen, men!
The scratching friar,
Catch-apple Jack,
Is back again,
Powdery, dusty,
From the Holy Land.
You'll know him by
The nipplish warts
All over his money-hand.

If you've a penny,
Or two, or three,
You'll be enticed.
He'll show you a bottle
Of Virgin's milk,
A hair from the beard
Of Jesus Christ,
God's wisdom tooth as well;
And a shrivelled imp
He luckily speared
In the center of midmost Hell.
He'll show you a bone—
The straightest one
Saint Anthony had;
He'll show you a splinter,
Worm-eaten and sad,
Of the genuine Cross;
And a bundle of moss
He stole, last winter,
From the Garden of Eden.

He'll show you a phial
(From Egypt's plague)
Heavily laden
With mystic healing,
Very vague,
Extremely vile,
But full of feeling.
Come on, men,
Give it a trial!

S. FOSTER DAMON (1893-)

BRIDGE

Shout from a clump of bathing boys:
"Mister! Mister! Scramble a quarter?"
Reverie splintered by the noise,
I toss a copper to the water.

Satirical at such small giving,
One of them stands aside and begs;
But all the others form a living
Waterlily of thin legs.

They plunge and leap and plunge like nimble
Porpoises or running salmon,
Enacting a most moral symbol
By sifting mud in search of Mammon.
But what a bore are such didactics!
I turn my eyes away—and stare
Astounded at the curious tactics
Of certain angels high in air,

(*Sicut superius!*) contriving
The same white pattern in their fun;
Equally noisy at their diving
Upward for a copper sun.

HERBERT GORMAN (1893-)

CHANSON DE CHATEAULAIRE

Though I am Chateaulaire who sings,
The pale man with the Chinese rings,
The cloudy-headed cane, the spats
Pearl-grey, the vast array of hats,
The gloves, the dragon samovar,
The tiny jugs of caviar,
The rare Picasso and the plate
From whose pale disk Marcel Proust ate,
Think not that I am wholly lost
Who never quite may count the cost.

Think not that I who spend my days
So greatly in such little ways,
Refinding in small *objets d'art*
My still renewed malefic star,
Find not a curious passion too
Not wholly visible to you,
Find epics in a whispered word
And in a tie-pin Hector's sword,
And altitudes above the snow
Half-chiselled in a cameo.

Though I am Chateaulaire who looms
A weary lounger in bright rooms
Where tea-cups clash, whose drooping hair
Discreetly dyed is dubious fair,
Who kisses polished finger-tips
Poetically with thin lips
And murmurs graceful commonplaces
To duchesses with pock-marked faces,
Think not that I am wholly found
Where women laugh and viols sound.

Though Guêrlain's perfume fill the air
And sallow barons mount the stair,
Napoléon brandy heat the brain,
Hispanos slur through Paris rain,
Blonde hair efface the sleepy lights,
Slav dancers pirouette in tights,
And husky voices talk and talk
Of nothing while gold slippers walk
Through Lanvin laces, think not I
Am wholly lost in Time's dark sigh.

Each instant my Antæus-rhyme
Gives back the lie to lecherous Time,
While odors fill me with that fire
Which is the death of all desire,
And amorous mouths forever give
Me death in life and bid me live:
The heavy scents, the parted lips
Are but the soul's perturbed eclipse,
Wherein the shadow is a well
Reflecting all those stars in hell.

And though the dark-browed midnight moans
To the frustrated saxophones,
Though the despairing violin
Like needles pierces through the skin,
And angry breasts rise up and fall
In foxtrots where the jewels call
One to the other, sard to pearl,
And every instant is a girl
Dying against Night's dinner-coat,
Time's hands upon her pulsing throat,

I lose and find myself therein,
A blown note in the rhythmic din
Enlarging till all sounds are one,
And that is I. For this I go
Where clinging silk is soft as snow—

The pale man with the Chinese rings,
The slender cane and brittle things—
And with a languid air present
The era with a testament.

MARK VAN DOREN (1894-)

BITTEN

If ever age
Remembers youth,
Is it something sharp—
Time's tooth—

Or does it arrive
With sudden might,
Like all of the West
On a windy night—

Out of nothing,
Into the heart,
That leaps and follows
And roars apart;

Till the wind dies
And the world is still. . . .
And teeth begin
To drill, drill?

DEFEATED FARMER

Lift as he will a wordless face
To an earless wind, to a sightless sky,
He is not told if meadows lie
Beyond the rumor of the race
He ran and lost—and found disgrace
With common trees that standing die.

He can no more escape the scorn
Of day, that loathes a failing thing,
Than the stripped oak can beat a wing
And fly the wood where it was born—
Falling at night in a forlorn
Contrary wood where mold-worms sing.

Once he thought the wind conspired
With wet and dry and hot and cold
To slave for him. But he is old,
And long ago the year was tired,
And if the wind was ever hired
It bustled off to better gold.

Once he felt the city's eyes
In envy on him as he swung
Ill storms away. But not a tongue
Proclaims him lately weather-wise,
And he has heard towered laughter rise
From throats that in their turn are young.

He still can lift a lidded gaze
And count the mornings light and dark.
So the stripped elm with fallen bark
Receives the days—but not its days.
The greener wood has private ways
That posted death may not remark.

ROBERT HILLYER (1895-)

THERMOPYLÆ

Men lied to them and so they went to die.
Some fell, unknowing that they were deceived,
And some escaped, and bitterly bereaved,
Beheld the truth they loved shrink to a lie,

And those there were that never had believed,
But from afar had read the gathering sky,
And darkly wrapt in that dread prophecy
Died trusting that their truth might be retrieved.

It matters not. For life deals thus with Man;
To die alone deceived or with the mass,
Or disillusioned to complete his span.
Thermopylæ or Golgotha, all one—
The young dead legions in the narrow pass;
The stark black cross against the setting sun.

PHELPS PUTNAM (1894-)

TO THE MEMORY OF YALE COLLEGE

I

It was an earthly place, but strangely made
Because it slept unruffled by the cold
Immutable ironic serenade,
The legal song of time and food and gold.

It lay beneath our common sky and yet
It was another world, a place called Yale,
A fancy land wherein there daily met
The permanence of dust with us, the frail.

We lived there once, and then across our days
Strode death, a masquerader capped and gowned;
And we, the boys whom nothing could amaze,
Stepped downward into life and so were drowned.

Quite gone—and there is only left behind
A dream of misty elms to plague the mind.

II

Where was despair a swift and careless joke,
And where was melancholy sweet and green?
Where was remorse a thin and lovely smoke?
And where was sin still arrogant and keen?

Where was unseemly chance a playful child,
And indolence the aim of death and birth,
And where was drunkenness still bright and wild,
And where was everything the food of mirth?

There in the college all these things were so—
The throat of thirsty youth drank our despair,
A gorgeous wine which made our senses glow
So that derisive laughter echoed there.

And even now with thin and clarion strains
That laughter sweeps across our pompous brains.

III

There underneath the elms were large delights
Beyond the rotten touch of circumstance,
And there for us the ribaldry of nights
When the bright harlot, thought, came out to dance.

A broken lamp swaying in scarves of smoke
Toward sprawling bodies in the firelight;
Fred murmured, "Some would say that God's a joke"
And Charlie shouted, "Spare my God tonight";

Bill said, "That bright illusion of the soul";
And I, "You mean illusion of the flesh"—
The adolescent words began to roll
So close that light was taken in their mesh.

At last a voice said, "Christ, tomorrow's here"—
And then another cried, "More beer, more beer."

IV

They spoke to us of liberty; but we,
Having the thing to waste, were undefiled
By theorems of slaves, and liberty
Made love to us, her brothers, and she smiled.

They spoke of truth; strange men played with the word
And rained illusions on our innocence,
And each one than the other more absurd.
They did their best in kindly impotence—

The president, and dean, and all their crew;
And some were bold, some wistful, and some mean—
But none could touch the quick, because we knew
That candid rowdy truth which we had seen.

We did not yearn for liberty or truth;
And so they came to us once, in our youth.

V

The climbers do not come to heaven; but he
After four flights of stairs, after a door
Arrived and said, "Say, do the Greek for me;
My trot is lost."—" 'Returning from the war,

The queen lay with the captain all night long.' "
"The hell you say. God help the loving boy.
I think the lost digamma was the song
She sung to tease the captain to her joy."

Half-hours with the Greeks—and then the bell
Brought them to class; the two sat by and smiled
As hyacinthine heroes went to hell,
And even the birdlike teacher was beguiled.

There was a door, after four flights of stairs,
Leading him into friendship unawares.

VI

To make us mindful boys the godly chime
Rang scrupulously—it was the college will;
It sang the silver measurement of time,
And our young curses rang more silver still.

Then say that we were bells cast into flesh,
And every wind that rustled in our blood
Stirred in our skulls clear poignant chimes and fresh
And poured them out a brilliant dreamful flood.

But now this wisdom sits upon our lips,
And smart reserve has caked us up with mold;
The winds die down to little breezy quips,
And not a hand can ring us, soft or bold.

Or if chance wakes our resonance again,
We clang the dull and sodden speech of men.

EDMUND WILSON (1895-)

WHEN ALL THE YOUNG WERE DYING

When all the young were dying, I dwelt among the dead—
Many I lifted from the homeless bed
And laid in that low chamber side by side,
But they were unknown men,
Nor told me youth had died.
But you—when all the years of honor and success—
Skill, courage, learning, and their fullest scope
Had brought but darkness, brooding, loneliness;
The solitary walk, the muffled door;
Scorn of that public life which once had been your hope—
When dead I saw you, silent, straight and lean,
The film of age's tarnishment effaced,
Life's heaviness refined—
Looking, I knew at last that I had seen

Edmund Wilson

That man of whom old Princeton teachers told—
The wonder of the Halls, the generous, the bold—
That youth by age and honor left behind,
By manhood's melancholy languished for—
The face of that young Princeton orator,
Rejoined in death at last.

—I blamed the day, the place,
Where flesh was rotting where it seemed most smooth,
Propping with age's comfort and grave ways
The broken back of youth:
Bred to one world and wearied by this other,
From which youth's straight backbone still kept you out,
You had earned but isolation and decay.

—Now I, more arrogant in a wiser day,
But half my life behind me, son of that father,
Know what blind life, what tomb of solitude,
What doubt, what draining of the spirit's blood,
Were ended where you lay.

E. MERRILL ROOT (1895-)

CHICAGO IDYLL

A knife within his hand he stood
  And struck his blow by rote:
All day, for six days in the week,
  He waded blood, and smote
Again . . . again . . . his knife into
  A tied hog's squealing throat.

Bare to the waist, with clot and clog
  Of steaming sweat and blood,
He watched the line of chain-caught hogs
  Flow by in screaming flood;
And slit their red life out, that caked
  His shoes like crimson mud.

Strange flies within an iron web,
  The writhing hogs clicked by—
One after one, in clockwork hell,
  Across a plaster sky—
Their blood-shot, little, bulging eyes
  Aware that they must die.

One hind leg noosed within a loop
  Of chain, head down they hung;
They writhed and squealed, they squealed and writhed,
  As down the room they swung,
Their damp snouts wrinkling at the smell
  Of blood from slit throats flung . . .

Of blood from throats wherein he thrust
  His blade like frozen fire . . .
He slit the soft and heavy flesh
  All day, and did not tire—
A wooden executioner
  Whose arms were twitched by wire.

He thrust the blade into their flesh
  And when he drew it out
The life came with it, choked and thick
  As from a gutter-spout;
Screams spattered into gasps, his hands
  Were red with froth and gout . . .

Thus for ten bloody years he stood
  And slaughtered hogs by rote:
Ten years—ten crimson stolid years—
  He waded blood, and smote
(Each day for six days in the week)
  His blade into a throat.

. . . . .

And then one day a something clicked
  Within his heavy brain:
The Life that is not a machine,
  From every sullen vein

And artery, rose to wreak abroad
On others its own pain.

The clockwork nightmare flood of hogs
Still clicked its shrieking way;
The river of blood dashed on the stones
Its steaming froth and spray:
The slaughtering went on, but he
Took ghastly holiday.

He stood beside a struggling hog—
His knife was at its neck;
But there the razor-whetted blade
Found strange and sudden check;
And the tied hog went squealing by,
Its throat without a fleck.

He stood, the knife within his hand,
He stood and seemed to brood;
And then he turned—still knife in hand—
From death's mere interlude . . .
And his knife (still hot with blood of hogs)
Found fit vicissitude.

He thrust it with a practised ease
And a swift blow's soft jar
Straight thru a fellow-workman's throat
And slit the jugular
And watched him sob his red life out
In ways familiar.

Then knife in hand he ran amok . . .
Slit, slit . . . before they knew,
Men felt the hot steel in their flesh,
And then the blood was thru . . .
And then they stiffened on the floor—
Heads hideously askew . . .

Before the dazed and cursing men
  Could scatter from his rush,
He struck three times and from three throats
  He saw the hot life gush . . .
And then an axe beat in his skull
  Against the brain's grey plush . . .

Even in that place of blood and doom,
  Where death was a cliché,
Men turned aside—and "Jesus Christ!"
  Was all that they could say.
And then the hogs moved on once more
  Upon their screaming way.

ROLFE HUMPHRIES (1894-)

HE VISITS A HOSPITAL

Now why should I, who sneer and frown
  With misanthropic hate,
Be, in this horizontal town,
  Swiftly compassionate?

And, curiously, why should I
  For all my lordly scorn
Shake at the knees to see men die
  Or hear them being born?

My coat of artificial rock
  Externally is firm;
Inside, susceptible of shock
  And flabby as a worm

Secretively there lurks, I think,
  The kind of soul that crawls;
For otherwise, how could I shrink
  At entering these walls?

Rolfe Humphries

DOWN THE FIELD

This little runt whom I outplay
Decisively from day to day

Must rage within his puny soul
As I go plunging toward the goal.

He cannot stand against my charge,
He is so small and I so large.

Spectacularly running, I
Dart close to him, then zigzag by,

Laugh at his serious headlong dives
That ought to cut me down like knives . . .

His sullen little heart is proud,
He hates to have a partial crowd

Cheer my determined arrogance;
He'll lay for me, and wait his chance.

As I am tiring from the grind
He'll come and clip me from behind,

Or in the pile, where no one sees,
He'll jump on me with both his knees.

A standing circle will surround
The helpless athlete on the ground

And say, without complaint or fear,
"Well, help us get him out of here!"

Then take their places, with the same
Apparent interest in the game.

But on the sidelines, where there are
Those who appreciate a star

Teeth clenched, they'll mutter, under their breath:
"Christ! get that dirty player, Death!"

HOWARD McKINLEY CORNING
(1896-)

THESE PEOPLE

They do not count the mountains that they climb,
Where mountains are a green surge in their blood;
Who stand within a miniature of time,
Nor comprehend the hill on which they stood.
They are sun-up with every day that bursts
Flamboyantly beyond the rim of sight;
And like wood-denizens that quench their thirsts
They drink from earth the sinews of their might.

Here are strange tales to ghost a countryside,
And ride the wind-blasts out to desolation.
More nights than one they have heard darkness ride
On strident hoofs to edge of hilled creation.
And waked in night to see the moon come by,
Her hair atangle in a hemlock spire;
And heard under the precipice-edge of sky
A thin-fluted and incoherent choir.

They have been putting by these nights for years—
Saving them up against extinguishment,
When the last morning bursts to a myriad spears,
And the last hill climbs through the firmament.
The things of light are theirs but clamorous dark
Has part and parcel in the way they walk:
Day through and in the night they listen—hark!
On the thin wind—! . . . and they are tensed to talk.

You here, they there, they tell the wind their tales
Then go about their doing time with life:
It's "Have you heard?" one hears on all the trails;
And "So he died!" one tells it like a knife.
There is no overtaking their belief
In transientness of everything save hills;
Though dying is a thing they'd just as lief
Have done with, since it's more than graves it fills.

. . . They have been climbing mountains out of birth,
And into death they will go climbing still:
These people, fashioned from the flight of earth,
That time frames miniatures on every hill.

MacKNIGHT BLACK (1896-)

CORLISS ENGINE-WHEEL

This is the moving nakedness that swirls once and is night,
And swirls again and bursts into day;
Here is the same clarity as in the wheel-swung universe;
The immense and circling travels of the sun, the stars,
Are woven like this in power and peace;
And all we have, our world, is bare in symbol here.
If this our ecstasy in watching driven steel
Were less, if this the glory that our handiwork pours out
Were paler than our foregone dreams, we might despair;
But, shaped by our hands from the world's stuff, this wheel
Is like a word our ears have taken from the sky;
And having it, we move with bolder blood,
And go undreaming to our paradise.

HEART

Remember the pure machine,
That brief and dogged thing, your heart.
When fear is windy at your bones,
Or when your lips are wet on lips,

Remember it:
Asking no leave to throb
And, throbbing, still unconcerned
With purposes beyond its stroke.
Remember what it is that drives
You to your grief and joy;
And how it thunders, desolate as waves;
And stirs, remote as south wind, through your breast.

JOSEPH AUSLANDER (1897-)

SUNRISE TRUMPETS

Dim wind pillared the hills: stiller than mist it seemed;
Somewhere water challenged silence, somewhere water failed;
Spiders brooded thick in silver and the willows dreamed . . .
Then the wind crumpled richly; night paled.

Black-eyed starlight dimmed; a voice blushed timidly;
Somber crimson crouched in shadow, rifts of hazel fire:
Dawn a drowsy eagle, and the brief audacity
Of thrushes fluting through the dew—one choir!

O the lift, the liquid blindness of their throats!
O the high white music and the blue plumes of the wind!
Up! the crested moment points a sword! the flashing notes
Of sunrise-trumpets! Up! dawn is javelined!

MALCOLM COWLEY (1898-)

WILLIAM WILSON

A man there is of fire and straw
consumed with fire, whom first I saw
once at a dance, where nearer and nearer
there swirled a mist, and lights grew dim,
And I came face to face with him

outlined against me in a mirror,
my own eyes staring from a mirror.

As red as wine, as white as wine,
his face which is not and is mine
and apes my face's pantomime
It makes a threatening movement, halts,
and orchestras in perfect time
continue the Blue Danube Waltz,
heavily dying to a waltz.

He makes a movement and retires,
this man of straw and many fires,
Iago doubled with Othello;
often I startled up in bed
to find him lying there, my fellow;
often I wish that he were dead,
and hack him often skin and bone,
and dreaming often, hear my own
life's blood drip on the crumpled pillow,
where once, immortal as a stone,

true love lay strangled by Othello.

THE URN

Wanderers outside the gates, in hollow
landscapes without memory, we carry
each of us an urn of native soil,
of not impalpable dust a double handful

carelessly gathered (was it garden mould,
or wood-soil fresh with hemlock needles, pine
and princess pine, this little earth we bore
in secret, vainly, over the frontier?)

A parcel of the soil not wide enough
or firm enough to build a dwelling on,
or deep enough to dig a grave, but cool

and sweet enough to sink the nostrils in
and find the smell of home, or in the ears
rumors of home like oceans in a shell.

STEPHEN VINCENT BENÉT
(1898-)

THE BALLAD OF WILLIAM SYCAMORE

My father was a mountaineer,
His fist was a knotty hammer.
He was quick on his feet as a running deer,
And he spoke with a Yankee stammer.

My mother she was merry and brave
And so she came to her labor,
With a tall green fir for her doctor grave,
And a stream for her comforting neighbor.

And some are wrapped in the linen fine,
And some like a godling's scion.
But I was cradled on twigs of pine
In the skin of a mountain lion.

And some remember a white, starched lap
And a ewer with silver handles.
But I remember a coonskin cap
And the smell of bayberry candles!

The cabin logs with the bark still rough,
And my mother who laughed at trifles,
And the tall, lank visitors, brown as snuff,
With their long, straight squirrel-rifles.

I can hear them dance, like a foggy song,
Through the deepest one of my slumbers,
The fiddle squeaking the boots along
And my father calling the numbers.

The quick feet shaking the puncheon-floor,
And the fiddle squeaking and squealing,
Till the dried herbs rattled above the door
And the dust went up to the ceiling.

There are children lucky from dawn till dusk,
But never a child so lucky!
For I cut my teeth on "Money Musk"
In the Bloody Ground of Kentucky!

When I grew tall as the Indian corn,
My father had little to lend me,
But he gave me his great old powder-horn
And his woodsman's skill to befriend me.

With a leather shirt to cover my back,
And a redskin nose to unravel
Each forest sign, I carried my pack
As far as a scout could travel.

Till I lost my boyhood and found my wife,
A girl like a Salem clipper!
A woman straight as a hunting-knife
With eyes as bright as the Dipper!

We cleared our camp where the buffalo feed,
Unheard-of streams were our flagons,
And I sowed my sons like the apple-seed
On the trail of the Western wagons.

They were right, tight boys, never sulky or slow,
A fruitful, a goodly muster!
The eldest died at the Alamo.
The youngest fell with Custer.

The letter that told it burned my hand.
Yet we smiled and said, "So be it!"
But I could not live when they fenced the land,
For it broke my heart to see it.

I saddled a red, unbroken colt
And rode him into the day there,
And he threw me down like a thunderbolt
And rolled on me as I lay there.

The hunter's whistle hummed in my ear
As the city-men tried to move me,
And I died in my boots like a pioneer
With the whole wide sky above me.

And your life's easy where mine was rough,
My little clerks of the city!
But an easy body is fragile stuff
And I find you easy to pity.

I lie in the heart of the fat, black soil
Like the seed of a prairie-thistle;
It has washed my bones with honey and oil
And picked them clean as a whistle.

And my youth returns, like the rains of Spring,
And my sons, like the wild geese flying,
And I lie and hear the meadow-lark sing
And have much content in my dying.

Go play with the towns you have built of blocks,
The towns where you would have bound me!
I sleep in my earth like a tired fox,
And my buffalo have found me.

GEORGE O'NEIL (1898-)

HOMAGE

Where once the sun had dragged its humid breath
Around the world, a long gray creeper twisted.
A cylinder of darkness, thinly misted,
The world hung lurching to the turn of death.

And as its movement, shuddering, desisted,
A tall shape drifted in a shaft of fire,
Floated to rest upon a jagged spire,
A rock still crumbling from the last slow tremor.
Cold black dust slid downward from his feet,
And rattled out upon a stony sheet
Where silence lifted an eternal streamer.

Huge and bright, this creature that had come
To stamp the cinder of a ruined star
Lowered a glaring brow and looked afar,
Stood frowning on the peak and called therefrom:

"What perfidy is this? And is there not
A gesture of obeisance in this place?
Has all this territory's term in space
By whatsoever lived here been forgot?"

Then something answered in that arid spot.
The last drop of the sea fell from its ledge,
Fell in a deep abyss with broken edge,
Splattered the final word that Earth could say.

The creature nodded, and he went away.

SOCRATES PRAYS A DAY AND A NIGHT

Half way along the sloping earth,
Light that had fallen down a hill
Bloomed on the breast of Socrates,
Turned, like a vine, his torso's girth,
Crept downward to his muscled knees,
Tied him in roots of morning, still.

Drooped heavily from off the sun
At noon, day's flame was all around him;
He breathed the shimmering of space.
The stinging burnished hornets found him;
Toads watched his ankles, bats, his face,
Till dusk's thin vigilance was done.

Men in the darkness stood to see
This pillar to the firmament
Set starkly with its looming head
Leaved with unwreathed infinity.
"His thought is unresolved," they said,
And marvelled at the brow unbent.
Crowding the mists across the air,
Dawn branched again, heaping the sky.
The freshets flooded gloom and glowed,
And, slowly, Socrates looked high;
Gold thorns were on his forehead there.
His head sank, and a radiance flowed.

WINIFRED WELLES (1893-)

COBWEB

It joins a dark pine to another tree;
And shining through its bones a ray of sun
Unearthed it like some graceful skeleton,
Or an unfinished frame of faëry
As frail as words. Not even thought could be
More carefully, more delicately spun—
As fine a thread as that invisible one
Of speech and silence between you and me.

The spider lurks there blotched and poisonous.
He is the monstrous god who can at will
Belch beauty from a stomachful of spit;
And dreaming of that silver binding us,
Which Love unwinds and weaves, my heart grows still
And cries that Love is lovely—isn't it?

WINTER APPLES

Not in a valley ivoried with grain,
  Where wheat is stacked in golden fountain-shapes,
Nor in some vineyard when an opal rain
  Chips off the amethyst and amber grapes.

But in that orchard on its hill of stones,
Where, rustily, the heavy leaves are pinned
To hollow stems, and, worn to creaking bones,
Boughs are like fingers scratching on the wind.

Here, less a woman than a moon-eyed witch,
In this most bitter place for fruit Love stands
Stooping where apples turn the black frost rich,
To lift one like a lantern in her hands.

INDIAN PIPES

These are the flowers for a mad bride—
At dusk, on the black earth, under black trees,
She shall fill her torn white hands with these.
She shall be heard by all the countryside,
When she comes singing to the woods' edge.
Whiter than dogwood shall flutter on the ledge
The silver tatters of her bridal dress.
Singing in a cracked voice a song of craziness,
Down the vague meadow, where her floating veil
Rests on the mist, she shall wander till her wail
Dies along the river in the mown hay.
There they shall find her at break of day,
With eyes like the first white frost, with the tips
Of her tired fingers and the droop of her lips
Blackened like the flowers in her dead bouquet,
The flowers that were all one waxen white,
Leaf, stem and cup, but could not last the night.

ELIZABETH COATSWORTH (1893-)

NO SNAKE IN SPRINGTIME

No snake in springtime ever felt the yearning
More poignantly to slough, to crack, to pull
The hated, hardened, drying, all-confining
Skin from the flesh, to reach beyond the bounds

Established by the petty planning blood,
To reach beyond, to grow, to feel the scratch
Of earth on sensitive membrane, to feel, to feel
Again, heat, cold, rough, fluid, solid, smooth,
To pass through daze and blindness and contortion
Into a tortured peace, no snake in springtime
Felt ever wearier of his seasoned armor,
The supple definitions of his strength.

CALLING IN THE CAT

Now from the dark, a deeper dark,
The cat slides,
Furtive and aware,
His eyes still shine with meteor spark
The cold dew weights his hair.
Suspicious,
Hesitant, he comes
Stepping morosely from the night,
Held but repelled,
Repelled but held,
By lamp and firelight.

Now call your blandest,
Offer up
The sacrifice of meat,
And snare the wandering soul with greeds,
Give him to drink and eat,
And he shall walk fastidiously
Into the trap of old
On feet that still smell delicately
Of withered ferns and mould.

GENEVIEVE TAGGARD (1894-)

FOR EAGER LOVERS

I understand what you are running for,
Slim naked boy, and why from far inland
You came between dark hills. I know the roar
The sea makes in some ears. I understand.

I understand why you were running now,
And how you heard the sea resound, and how
You leaped and left your valley for the long
Brown road. I understand the song

You chanted with your running, with your feet
Marking the measure of your high heart's beat.
Now you are broken. Seeing your wide brow,
I see your dreams. I understand you now.

Since I have run like you, I understand
The throat's long wish, the breath that comes so quick,
The heart's light leap, the heels that drag so sick,
And warped heat wrinkles, lengthening the sand. . . .

Now you are broken. Seeing your wide brow
I see your dreams, understanding now
The cry, the certainty, wide arms—and then
The way rude ocean rises and descends. . . .

I saw you stretched and wounded where tide ends.
I do not want to walk that way again.

WITH CHILD

Now I am slow and placid, fond of sun,
Like a sleek beast, or a worn one:
No slim and languid girl—not glad
With the windy trip I once had,

But velvet-footed, musing of my own,
Torpid, mellow, stupid as a stone.

You cleft me with your beauty's pulse, and now
Your pulse has taken body. Care not how
The old grace goes, how heavy I am grown,
Big with this loneliness, how you alone
Ponder our love. Touch my feet and feel
How earth tingles, teeming at my heel!
Earth's urge, not mine—my little death, not hers;
And the pure beauty yearns and stirs.

It does not heed our ecstasies, it turns
With secrets of its own, its own concerns,
Toward a windy world of its own, toward stark
And solitary places. In the dark,
Defiant even now, it tugs and moans
To be untangled from these mother's bones.

BABETTE DEUTSCH (1895-)

THE HUNT

Where the cement-lined bowels of the city
Noisily churn their pallid human food,
I drew my mind away from anger and pity,
Freed it from time, and lost the multitude.

Time lay behind, like a thin river sinking
Into those sands whose silence cannot crack.
Space lay below, wrinkled and grey, and shrinking
Like some old elephant's retreating back.

And there was peace, though my poor carcass shifted
Uneasily, remembering the chain
At which my mind, being so far uplifted,
Blindly would tug and mercilessly strain.

Yet did I cry: Go on, and find the marrow
Of that shy, arrogant creature, slim of horn,
Whose eyes are large as love, whose flanks are narrow
As truth, though in the hunting you be torn.

But then my stupid carcass pulling meanly
Upon the leash, my mind turned back, and there
Was Space, the giant, spurning suns serenely,
Was Time, the serpent, with his freezing stare.

MARJORIE MEEKER ( )

MEMORIAL SONNET

By many a saint and many a scholar led,
I devised dreams where death was so assailed
That grief became a source where beauty fed.
My dear, my dear . . . the reasoned dream has failed.
Let nobler hearts, or those who loved you less,
Become with sorrow beautiful and wise;
I only know, upon your nothingness
I stare with cold uncomprehending eyes.
Love cannot glorify the loss of love,
Nor loneliness exalt an empty room,
Nor any gracious solace lift above
The cold ironic shadow of a tomb
Whose simple breadth no fire of faith can span
By any pledge of any God or man.

LOUISE BOGAN (1897-)

WINTER SWAN

It is a hollow garden, under the cloud;
Beneath the heel a hollow earth is turned;
Within the mind the live blood shouts aloud;
Under the breast the willing blood is burned,

Shut with the fire passed and the fire returned.
But speak, you proud!
Where lies the leaf-caught world once thought abiding,
Now but a dry disarray and artifice?
Here, to the ripple cut by the cold, drifts this
Bird, the long throat bent back, and the eyes in hiding.

CASSANDRA

To me, one silly task is like another.
I bare the shambling tricks of lust and pride.
This flesh will never give a child its mother,—
Song, like a wing, tears through my breast, my side,
And madness chooses out my voice again,
Again. I am the chosen no hand saves:
The shrieking heaven lifted over men,
Not the dumb earth, wherein they set their graves.

MEN LOVED WHOLLY BEYOND WISDOM

Men loved wholly beyond wisdom
Have the staff without the banner,
Like a fire in a dry thicket,
Rising within women's eyes
Is the love men must return.
Heart, so subtle now, and trembling,
What a marvel to be wise,
To love never in this manner!
To be quiet in the fern
Like a thing gone dead and still,
Listening to the prisoned cricket
Shake its terrible, dissembling
Music in the granite hill.

LÉONIE ADAMS (1899-)

APRIL MORTALITY

Rebellion shook an ancient dust,
  And bones bleached dry of rottenness
Said: Heart, be bitter still, nor trust
  The earth, the sky, in their bright dress.

Heart, heart, dost thou not break to know
  This anguish thou wilt bear alone?
We sang of it an age ago,
  And traced it dimly upon stone.

With all the drifting race of men
  Thou also art begot to mourn
That she is crucified again,
  The lonely Beauty yet unborn.

And if thou dreamest to have won
  Some touch of her in permanence,
'Tis the old cheating of the sun,
  The intricate lovely play of sense.

Be bitter still, remember how
  Four petals, when a little breath
Of wind made stir the pear-tree bough,
  Blew delicately down to death.

THE RIVER IN THE MEADOWS

Crystal parting the meads,
A boat drifted up it like a swan,
Tranquil, lovely, its bright front to the waters,
A slow swan is gone.

Full waters, O flowing silver,
Pure, level with the clover,
It will stain drowning a star,
With the moon it will brim over.

Running through lands dewy and shorn,
Cattle stoop at its brink,
And every fawny-colored throat
Will sway its bells and drink.

I saw a boat sailing the river
With a tranced gait; it seemed
Loosed by a spell from its moorings,
Or a thing the helmsman dreamed.

They said it would carry no traveler,
But the vessel would go down,
If a heart were heavy-winged,
Or the bosom it dwelt in, stone.

THE HORN

In coming to the feast I found
A venerable silver-throated horn,
Which were I brave enough to sound,
Then all as from that moment born
Would breathe the honey of this clime,
And three times merry in their time,
Would praise the virtue of that horn.

The mist is risen like thin breath,
The young leaves of the ground smell chill,
So faintly are they strewn on death,
The road I came down a west hill.
But none can name as I can name
A little golden-bright thing flame,
Since bones have caught their narrow chill.

And in a thicket passed me by,
In the black brush a running hare,
Having a spectre in his eye,
That sped in darkness to the snare;
And who but I can know in pride,
The heart set beating in the side
Has but the wisdom of a hare?

BELL TOWER

I have seen, O desolate one, the voice has its tower,
The voice also, builded at secret cost,
Its temple of precious tissue; not silent then,
Forever. Casting silence in your hour.

There marble boys are leant from the light throat,
Thick locks that hang with dew, and eyes dew-lashed,
Dazzled with morning,—angels of the wind,
With ear a-point for the enchanted note.

And these at length shall tip the hanging bell,
And first the sound must gather in deep bronze,
Till, rarer than ice, purer than a bubble of gold,
It fill the sky to beat on an airy shell.

MARGARET TOD RITTER ( )

INDICTMENT

Hoof-beat on the early air,
Hoof-beat of a rider coming;
Sleepily the fated hare
Listens to the measured drumming,

Listens to the ominous roll
Of a strange, unvaried thunder,
Wakes in part, stirs, wakes in whole,
Puts off dreaminess for wonder,

Puts off wonder for disease,
Starts up trembling, robbed of haven,
Bounds out wildly through the trees
Running, running like a craven.

Fields of newly garnered wheat
Left in seven arcs of wonder.
Now a brook beneath the feet,
Now a cornfield streaming under.

Miles of blue-bells scarcely grazed
By a living, leaping arrow;
Never has a comet blazed
With as swift a trail and narrow.

Morning flattens into noon;
Afternoon is on the meadow;
Nothing moves beneath the moon
Save a horseman and a shadow.

Suddenly the sight turns blind:
Suddenly the race is over.
Master hunter, you will find,
Hidden in that bunch of clover,

Something warm and soft and still,
Something beautiful and furry.
Callous moon on callous hill,
Take your time, sir, there's no hurry.

GLADYS OAKS (1898-)

ANATOLE FRANCE AT EIGHTY

A tired vulture nibbles at the bleak
Flesh it thought ageless. Now so thin and cold.
Warm, liquid flesh that used to thrill its beak.
The vulture starves. Prometheus has grown old!

What good blood once. What heady blood to quaff.
What flavor, and what double inspiration
To eat. And how Prometheus could laugh!
That laugh was fire to a generation.

Prometheus is old. No bitter noise
Of fire turns Jove's thunder glib and faint.
A Titan's lips have learned a martyr's poise,
The sweet and silly smiling of a saint.

A generation shivers. From its pain
A generation laughs . . . and lights again.

CLINCH CALKINS ( )

THE DEAD CITY

The wind blows cold from a storm
And brings a low rack.
Oh, here is the rape and the sack
And the end of the summer. Her fiery flashes
Are past. Past even her thunders.
Her intricate fashion and form
Are in ashes.

Trees bend at a leaf's dying breath
And lower to mould and to worm
Flesh given to passionate death.
(Your mind fights and wonders,
But what is there more?)
The city lies dead on the shore.
High on her walls the sea washes.

Like frightened ships riding the wave
The woods ride the skies.
Far from the sinister mast
The night's pennon flies
Streaming low, streaming black.

But the fire leaps up in the breast,
In the blood flames its final seduction.
Our summer goes dark like the rest,
There is nothing to save.
Hard with our smouldering mouths
We kiss our destruction.

JOSEPHINE STRONGIN (1909-)

POEM

Child—in all the flying sky,
that is your friend
because some flying oneness in yourself
rides rushing high,
  do you see the waning bird,
that is your friend
because some straining bird-heart in your being
beats and sails and pains
and slashes height—and wanes?
Child—down all the grown, old mountains,
that are your friends
because some found, whole knowledge in you,
glides immovably beneath the moving sky,
  do you find the settled, seeking trees,
that are your friends
because some feathery, rooted thing in you,
sways and breaks and dies,
and lives along your mountains,
and stands black against your skies?

In all the hourful ocean,
that is your friend
because some half monotonous appeal in you,
lifts and sinks,—lifts and sinks,
and sways and foams and breaks,
  do you find the rain and sun and wind and moon,

that are your friends
because some hidden simple whole of you,
rends and shocks and moves and shines,
in vast whole cosmic wide undifferent power?
In all the vital soulful swirling world,
that is your friend
because some ragged motion in you,
grows and slows and tangles,
frets and swirls, responds and sounds,
  do you find the electric pregnant earth,
that is your friend
because some timeless fighting feeling in you,
intricately curls and slips,—
unfurls in sticky young elastic things,
and old dead rustles sifting softer dust
and settling—and being electric pregnant earth all more?

Child—in all your being,
that is a friend
because the winds and waves and storms and days,
and hills and trees and rays and beams and seasons
beat and move in you,
  do you find a harmony of Whole,
that is a friend
because its all vast being seems you
and you seem One?

NATHALIA CRANE (1913-)

THE VESTAL

Once a pallid vestal
  Doubted truth in blue:
Listed red as ruin,
  Harried every hue;

Barricaded vision,
  Garbed herself in sighs;
Ridiculed the birth marks
  Of the butterflies.

Dormant and disdainful,
  Never could she see
Why the golden powder
  Decorates the bee;

Why a summer pasture
  Lends itself to paint;
Why love unappareled
  Still remains the saint.

Finally she faltered;
  Saw at last, forsooth,
Every gaudy color
  Is a bit of truth.

Then the gates were opened;
  Miracles were seen;
That instructed damsel
  Donned a gown of green;

Wore it in a churchyard,
  All arrayed with care;
And a painted rainbow
  Shone above her there.

THE MOON OF BROOKLYN

When the moon comes over Brooklyn
  On time with the borough clock,
'Tis the same that saw Palmyra
  And the walls of Antioch.

'Tis the moon, our first relation,
That kindled the Lesbian bard,
And shone on the old Aegean
As it shines on the Navy Yard.

The moon beloved by Homer,
That Tycho Brahe drew;
That lights the wreaths for soldiers
In Bedford Avenue.

MAURICE LESEMAN (1899-)

A MAN WALKS IN THE WIND

Being so tired, it is hard to hide from you;
It is hard to walk any longer in the night and the wind.
I have gone along brown trees, I have crunched the blue
Frost-bitten grass under my feet, I have stood
In parted thickets, caught in the crackling leaves,
I have seen the brushpiles on the ridges fired,
I have watched the twisted smoke that weaves
Blue strands in the black branches of the wood;
And now, being tired,
Being tired now and worn enough for rest,
Would it not be safe, would it not be very good
To-night, to find it in your breast,
In your wise breast where this is understood?

Do you remember another night of wind,
Moonlight and wind, when it was all
The sky could do to keep from reeling upon us in shame,
When, breathless, we held it there
From slipping down about us with your hair?
Do you remember a night last fall
When the wind whirled us and whetted us to flame,
And whirled the leaves and whetted us to flame,
Whipped out your dress and would not let us be,

And drove us along the prairie, two shadows clinging,
And dropped us at the foot of a tree?

That was September before the frost:
In the morning the prairie was gray with mist
And the grass was matted white where we had lain.
And the arms of the elm, the grizzled arms of the elm,
Pawed at the wind for something that was lost,
And knotted up with pain.
Fall comes to fall again,
And I walk alone, I walk alone in the wind. . . .
I cannot master the beauty of the night.
I walk alone. The poplar fingers rise
Tall and awful among white glittering stars.
Surely this is the most sorrowful delight
Of any man, to walk alone with a dream.
Do you hear the ripple singing in the stream?
The beauty of the poplars strikes me down.
The wind over the grass—I had not known
The wind was such a lonely thing.
The wind cleaves me with beauty to the bone,
And the gray clouds that brush the fields and fling
Gray darkness on to the driven prairie, and fold
Their lonely silence around the hills, and fly
On to the upper night, to the upper air—
They have beat me clear, they have beat my body cold
With beauty. Do you hear the wild geese cry?

And now the dark is heavy in my head,
And in my heart all the sorrows have come home.
I am tired—you do not know how tired I come.
You would not care tonight? You would not care,
But let your hand wander through my hair?
There would be no hurt now, we are both too tired.
I would finger the soft silk of your dress the same
As long ago, when you were first desired,
As long ago when the wind whirled us to flame.

For we know the bitter tune the wind sings;
There will be silence now, there will be rest,
And eyes will heal after the wind stings,
And I shall hear your heart under your breast
Moving across time with a great flow.
And we shall hear no more the wind's calling,
But only the silence of it falling and falling;
And always the room will throb quietly and slow.

HORACE GREGORY (1898-)

INTERIOR: THE SUBURBS

There is no rest for the mind
in a small house. It moves, looking for God,
with a mysterious eye fixed on the bed,
into a cracked egg at breakfast,
looking for glory in an arm-chair,
or simply noting the facts of life
in a fly asleep on the ceiling.

The mind, sunk in quiet places,
(like old heroes) sleeps no more,
but walks abroad in a slouch hat
performing adultery at violent street corners;
then, trembling, returns,
sadly directs its mysterious eye
into a coffee-cup. There is no rest—
for there are many miles to walk in the small house,
traveling past the same chairs, the same tables,
the same glassy portraits on the walls,
flowing into darkness.

There is no victory in the mind,
but desperate valor,
shattering the four walls,

disintegrating human love,
until the iron-lidded mysterious eye
(lowered carefully with the frail body
under churchyard gardens)
stares upward, luminous, inevitable,
piercing solar magnitudes
on a fine morning.

R. ELLSWORTH LARSSON (1901-)

FROM "O CITY, CITIES!"

No city shall I call my own
the winds can blow down and the rains
dissolve
to leave one standing
isolate in wide
unfruitful savage lands
that show the season and the worm
can scrawl a dry sarcasm on the walls of all
these cities we have sown

no city winds
can blow down and the rains dissolve
showing the gaping ribs of steel
beneath the facile
flesh of stone
the rooms untenanted
except of eyes that watched the burning
cities fall
column and column
cornice and arcade

(and the isles
drifting to seaward
on the seaward swells

dissolved
seaward the vagrant
isles
the isles
drifting to seaward
on the swells
unravelled by drifting mists
as winds unravel vagrant bells).

JAMES DALY (1901-)

THE EAGLE

If you would see him,
Wait on desolate crags
Where the near clouds are cold.
Wait, and over the third peak
At dawn you will see a greater
Than yourself.
Your own
Remembered shadow, cast
On stone by a far moon
(All night your dark companion
And your comforter), will loom
Bleak in your mind under
The shadow of great wings reeling
And tumbling down the sky.

Tumbling and screaming down that bold
Steep sky, past you and past
Your shadow, down and down—

The mighty bird will dim
All wingless images in your eyes,
And drown all lesser cries
Your ears have known.

KENNETH FEARING (1902-)

JOHN STANDISH, ARTIST

If I am to live, or be in the studios,
If I am to be in the quiet halls and clubs;
Quiet at tea;
If I am to talk calmly at dinner, when evening falls,
If I am to breathe
When it is night, and millions are awake,
Moving like a sea, not human, not known;
When millions are aroused to stare, to laugh, to kill;
When I feel them;
When they have no voices, but they have mouths and eyes;
When their wants are confused, but implacable;
When a theory about them becomes nothing,
and a portrait of them would look well on no studio wall;
When they cringe, when they scream, when they are counted by millions;
When they have no meaning to me, to themselves, to the earth; but they are alive;
If I am to live; if I am to breathe,
I must walk with them a while; laugh with them; stare and point;
Pick one and follow him to the rotted wharves;
Write my name, under his, in grey latrines: "John Standish, Artist."
I must follow him, screaming as he does, through the docks, basements, tenements, wharves,
Follow him till he sleeps, and kill him with a stone.

ALEXANDER LAING (1903-)

THE LAST ROMANTIC

Time went away, and left him lingering,
The last romantic in a little town.
He drowses in the twilight, fingering
A scrap of muslin from an antique gown.

Old odors find his nostrils when he drowses:
Cedar, Amontillado, lavender;
And white façades of stately Georgian houses
Grow in the air to make a frame for her.

She has been dead for thirty years or more;
And even could she come, eyes glistening,
He would not hear her fingers strike the door:
He has gone deaf from too much listening.

He has gone deaf, and time has gone away.
The oleander flowers soon will pass.
His julep stands forgotten on a tray,
And "Pickwick" sprawls forlornly on the grass.

Over the garden drifts a scent of musk,
And in the fringes of the fading light
Round hills, like lonely opals in the dusk,
Deepen to purple, and are one with night.

CHARLES A. WAGNER (1901-)

THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER

I

One man's shoulder, another man's thigh—
The unknown soldier, here I lie.
Rest and quiet is all I seek,
Letting the chambermaid statesmen speak,

Letting the peace that they begot
Rot in the quick earth as I rot,
Letting the peace that they declared
Fall in the pit my bones have shared,
Letting the Kings and Queens go by
One man's shoulder, another man's thigh.

II

The unknown soldier, here I lie,
One man's forehead, another man's eye,
One man's collar-bone, one man's leg
By which to lift the world a peg.
They made of me a handy penny
Because my bones are made of many,
But though my limbs are all assorted
The brain of me is not distorted,
Is all alive and full of reason
And tracking still the trail of treason. . . .

III

They are not dead! Their brains are steady;
The millions lying still lie heady,
Their eyes and fingers gleam and point
And there are flames from each small joint.
Not one is lost, they all are known,
They tally, every thread and bone,
Their sleep is false, disturbed, unsound,
You hear it in the blackened ground—
It mutters "all is not yet over,
There's more of me than tracks of clover."

IV

One leg's a runner's, fleet and thin.
He'll bring the early violets in
And bind them in his sweetheart's hair
When love has dropped the dress of care.

One leg's a farmer's, badly torn.
He'll space the even rows with corn
And call the cows in from the field
When rust has hammered on the shield:
He'll have a daughter, tall and fair
With purple violets in her hair!

V

One arm's a thief's arm, long and white—
He'll rest his head on it all night
And turn the plow from off the stone
When men take each their little throne.
One arm's a poet's, straight and strong
For whom I sing this bit of song.
He has a violet from each eye
Continuing his sight of sky
And from each finger-tip there goes
A want that's ended in a rose.

VI

Unknown I haunt each palace door,
I stand upon each judgment floor,
Unknown from out my mingled pit
I leer upon the Law, new-writ;
Aye, and my tomb is made of fire
Where Heaven and Hell both draw desire,
A cauldron for some God afar
To lean down and prepare a star,
A seed, deep fallen in the earth
To reassure itself of birth.

VII

One man's shoulder, another man's arm
By which to steer the world from harm!
Unknown the wind will tell my heart
And make wild roses spring and start,

Unknown the tongues of men will turn
The fiery sentences I burn,
No mortal names to hush the cry
But one man's shoulder, another man's thigh,
A loss where men would pity give,
A gain where Thought itself may live.

VIII

They do not know my mingled thought,
They who of late their speeches brought
And doffed their hats, and bowed before
The symbol of the end of war.
My thought is further than they know
Who mingled me unknowing so,
My limbs are, shattered and unknown,
Stronger than I would be alone.
I am not one, but I am all—
I answer every soldier's call!

IX

My thought runs fire through the ground—
Each battlefield, from mound to mound
Since first Man ever learned the thrust
That made him kin to all the dust.
My thought is of another war
With Love and Life to battle for.
I shall be gathering by rank
And halt before Time's outer flank.
About! and muster all the dead
Who ever falsely fell and bled.

X

Unknown, my song shall weave its horn
Into the ranks of the unborn.
Unknown my strength and secret lies—
One man's shoulder, another man's eyes!

Charles A. Wagner

And until Love walks in the sun
I shall not lay aside this gun—
Until the busy streets proclaim
That life and beauty are the same,
Until men's voices find the power
To call each colored weed a flower.

LINCOLN FITZELL (1903-)

CONFLICT

Within this stumbling ground for bulls
Breath is of odorless decay,
And hair of grass to hide worn skulls
Long since from terror put away.

The centipede climbs up the walls
Man built to keep the tiger out,
The snake into the crevice crawls
Made by the thunder-break and shout.

And one, a bull, stung at the life
In his proud arc of challenge turns
But finds no breast to meet his strife
More thundering than that of worms.

STANLEY J. KUNITZ (1905-)

FOR THE WORD IS FLESH

O ruined father dead, long sweetly rotten
Under the dial, the time-dissolving urn,
Beware a second perishing, forgotten,
Heap fallen leaves of memory to burn
On the slippery rock, the black eroding heart,
Before the wedged frost splits it clean apart.

The nude hand drops no sacramental flower
Of blood among the tough upthrusting weeds.
Senior, in this commemorative hour,
What shall the quick commemorate, what deeds
Ephemeral, what dazzling words that flare
Like rockets from the mouth and burst in air?

Of hypochondriacs that gnawed their seasons
In search of proofs, Lessius found twenty-two
Fine arguments, Tolet gave sixty reasons
Why souls survive. And what are they to you?
And, father, what to me, who cannot blur
The crystal brain with fantasies of Er,

Remembering such factual spikes as pierce
The supplicating palms, and by the sea
Remembering the eyes I hear the fierce
Wild cry of Jesus on the holy tree,
Yet have of you no syllable to keep,
Only the deep rock crumbling in the deep.

Observe the wisdom of the Florentine
Who, feeling death upon him, scribbled fast
To make revision of a deathbed scene,
Gloating that he was accurate at last.
Let sons learn from their lipless fathers how
Man enters hell without a golden bough.

STANLEY BURNSHAW (1906-)

END OF THE FLOWER-WORLD (A.D. 2300)

Fear no longer for the lone grey birds
That fall beneath the world's last autumn sky,
Mourn no more the death of grass and tree.

These will be as they have ever been:
Substance of springtime; and when flower-world ends
They will go back to earth, and wait, and be still—

Safe with the dust of birds long dead; with boughs
Turned ash long, long ago, that still are straining
To leave their tombs and find the hills again,

Flourish again, mindless of the people—
The strange ones now on a leafless earth—
Who seem to have no care for things in blossom.

Fear no more for trees, but mourn instead
The children of these strange sad men: Their hearts
Will hear no music but the song of death.

HART CRANE (1899-)

THE DANCE

The swift red flesh, a winter king—
Who squired the glacier woman down the sky?
She ran the neighing canyons all the spring;
She spouted arms; she rose with maize—to die.

And in the autumn drouth, whose burnished hands
With mineral wariness found out the stone
Where prayers, forgotten, streamed the mesa sands?
He holds the twilight's dim, perpetual throne.

Mythical brows we saw retiring—loth,
Disturbed and destined, into denser green.
Greeting they sped us, on the arrow's oath:
Now lie incorrigibly what years between . . .

There was a bed of leaves, and broken play;
There was a veil upon you, Pocahontas, bride—
O princess whose brown lap was virgin May;
And bridal flanks and eyes hid tawny pride.

I left the village for dogwood. By the canoe
Tugging below the mill-race, I could see
Your hair's keen crescent running, and the blue
First moth of evening take wing stealthily.

What laughing chains the water wove and threw!
I learned to catch the trout's moon whisper, I
Drifted how many hours I never knew,
But, watching, saw that fleet young crescent die,—

And one star, swinging, take its place, alone,
Cupped in the larches of the mountain pass—
Until, immortally, it bled into the dawn.
I left my sleek boat nibbling margin grass . . .

I took the portage climb, then chose
A further valley-shed; I could not stop.
Feet nozzled wat'ry webs of upper flows;
One white veil gusted from the very top.

O Appalachian Spring! I gained the ledge;
Steep, inaccessible smile that eastward bends
And northward reaches in that violet wedge
Of Adirondacks!—wisped of azure wands,

Over how many bluffs, tarns, streams I sped!
—And knew myself within some boding shade:—
Grey tepees tufting the blue knolls ahead,
Smoke swirling through the yellow chestnut glade . . .

A distant cloud, a thunder-bud—it grew,
That blanket of the skies: the padded foot
Within,—I heard it; 'til its rhythm drew,
—Siphoned the black pool from the heart's hot root!

A cyclone threshes in the turbine crest,
Swooping in eagle feathers down your back;
Know, Maquokeeta, greeting; know death's best;
—Fall, Sachem, strictly as the tamarack!

A birth kneels. All her whistling fingers fly.
The oak grove circles in a crash of leaves;
The long moan of a dance is in the sky.
Dance, Maquokeeta: Pocahontas grieves . . .

And every tendon scurries toward the twangs
Of lightning deltaed down your saber hair,
Now snaps the flint in every tooth; red fangs
And splay tongues thinly busy the blue air . . .

Dance, Maquokeeta! snake that lives before,
That casts his pelt, and lives beyond! Sprout, horn!
Spark, tooth! Medicine-man, relent, restore—
Lie to us,—dance us back the tribal morn!

Spears and assemblies: black drums thrusting on—
O yelling battlements,—I, too, was liege
To rainbows currying each pulsant bone:
Surpassed the circumstance, danced out the siege!

And buzzard-circleted, screamed from the stake;
I could not pick the arrows from my side.
Wrapped in that fire, I saw more escorts wake—
Flickering, sprint up the hill groins like a tide.

I heard the hush of lava wrestling your arms,
And stag teeth foam about the raven throat;
Flame cataracts of heaven in seething swarms
Fed down your anklets to the sunset's moat.

O, like the lizard in the furious noon,
That drops his legs and colors in the sun,
—And laughs, pure serpent, Time itself, and moon
Of his own fate, I saw thy change begun!

And saw thee dive to kiss that destiny
Like one white meteor, sacrosanct and blent
At last with all that's consummate and free
There, where the first and last gods keep thy tent.

. . . . .

Thewed of the levin, thunder-shod and lean,
Lo, through what infinite seasons dost thou gaze—
Across what bivouacs of thine angered slain,
And see'st thy bride immortal in the maize!

Totem and fire-gall, slumbering pyramid—
Though other calendars now stack the sky,
Thy freedom is her largesse, Prince, and hid
On paths thou knewest best to claim her by.

High unto Labrador the sun strikes free
Her speechless dream of snow, and stirred again,
She is the torrent and the singing tree,
And she is virgin to the last of men . . .

West, west and south! winds over Cumberland
And winds across the llano grass resume
Her hair's warm sibilance. Her breasts are fanned
O stream by slope and vineyard—into bloom!

And when the caribou slant down for salt
Do arrows thirst and leap? Do antlers shine
Alert, star-triggered in the listening vault
Of dusk?—And are her perfect brows to thine?

We danced, O Brave, we danced beyond their farms,
In cobalt desert closures made our vows . . .
Now is the strong prayer folded in thine arms,
The serpent with the eagle in the boughs.

PART TEN

DAVID McCORD

TO A CHILD

I wish I could remember
The things I used to know:
How many eggs the warbler lays,
And where the turtles go;
Or if the ant has intellect,
And what to do with snow.

So many things were simple;
I could have told you then
All sorts of satisfactory ways
To make a rabbit pen,
Or reconstruct the footprint
Of a decent Indian.

And did you care for lizards,
I had the very stones
Whereunder down the stream they curled
Their salamander bones;
Or I could organize my throat
In lovely overtones.

I have forgotten now, I fear,
These elementary facts
Of animal behavior
And how creation acts,
And things you never seem to find
In treatises and tracts.

JOHN PEALE BISHOP

IN THE DORDOGNE

We stood up before day
and shaved by metal mirrors
in the faint flame of a faulty candle.

And we hurried down the wide stone stairs
with a clirr of spur chains
on stone. And we thought
when the cocks crew
that the ghosts of a dead dawn
would rise and be off. But they stayed
under the window, crouched on the staircase,
the window now the color of morning.

The colonel slept in the bed of Sully
slept on: but we descended
and saw in a niche in the white wall
a Virgin and child, serene
who were stone: we saw sycamores:
three aged magis
scattering gifts of gold.
But when the wind blew, there were autumn odors
and the shadowed trees
had the dapplings of young fauns.

And each day one died or another
died: each week we sent out thousands
that returned by hundreds
wounded or gassed. And those that died
we buried close to the old wall
within a stone's throw of Perigord
under the tower of the troubadours.

And because we had courage
because there was courage and youth
ready to be wasted: because we endured
and were prepared for all endurance:
we thought something must come of it:
that the Virgin would raise her child and smile
the trees gather up their gold and go
that courage would avail something
and something we had never lost
be regained through wastage, by dying
by burying the others under the English tower.

The colonel slept on in the bed of Sully
under the ravelling curtains: the leaves fell
and were blown away: the young men rotted
under the shadow of the tower
in a land of small clear silent streams
where the coming on of evening is
the letting down on blue and azure veils
over the clear and silent streams
delicately bordered by poplars.

ALAN PORTER

THE DEAN

Divine perfection, we have sinned, 'tis true:
We play the fool and punishment is due.
But oh, take pity! There are pains too strong
For our poor mortal flesh to suffer long.
What final blasphemy did we commit
That needs Damnation's self to punish it?
What moved Thee, when already we were curst
To send a plague prodigiously the worst—
At this sad moment of the world's career
To put the Publicising Parson here?

How Fleet Street winks, and sneaks him into fame!
How dubious chemists join to bless his name!

Hear him declare "I come to cure the soul
By the neat practices of Birth Control.
Mankind was ever stupid: men have sought
To rein their passions and direct their thought;
Be wiser; let your sensual natures free
And God shall praise your infertility."
(St. *Paul's?* St. *Paul's?* Is there no virtue found
In that once awful and constraining sound?
Not even his patron and paymaster sting
The complicated conscience of Dean I—e?)
But hear him further. Hear him now propose
The perfect explanation of our woes.
"All men my equals? Why, there may be some;
But only friends; not persons from a slum.
Those men are ugly, ignorant of Greek;
Their minds are dull, their manners far to seek;
They work; they get their wages by the week.
The Empire totters, and I feel distressed,
When men are seen inelegantly dressed:
We Christians-within-reason may think meet
To wash a few, but no such dirty, feet.
The wrath of God descends upon them. Hi!
Don't touch them! They're contagious! Let them die!
God has decreed, for all whom He holds dear,
A pulpit, and three thousand pounds a year.
Wines old but plentiful, food plain but choice,
A mournful visage and a mincing voice."
So in the creed he'll introduce new features,
Think well of God, abominate God's creatures;
Affix queer titles to the universe
—Perfect, Unchanging, Daily Worse and Worse;
And boast himself (then follow him who list)
The true, the neo-neoplatonist.

Unfair and scurrilous? But oh, believe,
If I seem bitter, bitterly I grieve.

Think, when despair has touched the heart enough,
The soul grows primitive, the tongue turns rough.
I saw a land whose citizens were blest;
For all were free to wonder, reign, and rest·
Each man so master of himself that Fate
Came as a bride, modest, immaculate—
Each moment was a quick new pulse of bliss;
Men thought, "What glory shall I forge from this?"
And were there priests? There were, by heaven above!
—Those beings whose nativity was Love.
If men saw mysteries every step they trod,
If men saw beauty, and if men saw God,
If men were fire celestial and so shone
With love, they lightened all they looked upon,
If men rejoiced in men and flowers and beasts,
If men were seraphim—such men were priests.

Too bright, too blest! The cold world closes round.
My wits were loose. My legs had lost the ground.
Derision warns me "Never soar so high:
Be calm, be temperate, when you prophesy."
Then God forgive me for this dream; but more
Those who have killed the dream and left me poor.

HILDEGARDE FLANNER

SPRING'S ON THE CURB

Business and bluebirds waken first in spring,
Steel and arbutus, an American date.
Motors and memories, so slick in rain,
Move up by silver points, to saturate.

Domestic to our bough, and primed with grace,
Song-sparrow pumps his song and drinks it back,
While Easter, smart and innocent, shines twice,
Once from the polish on a Cadillac.

My blood shakes in my flesh, and let it be,
For how the chorus from the market swells
Whose blessing falls upon a nation's woe
Like dawn upon the Texas Company's wells.

Narcissus takes the grade, so steep and raw,
April's pale omnibus is quick and due.
The earth is thine, Jehovah said of old,
If some is left when other men are through.

Listen, the eagle having dined on lark,
Sings like his dinner; you know what I mean.
Plumbers and bankers strolling out by dark
Smell spring and spring, and the best gasoline.

Between the violet and the dividend
The heart grows big in every patriot.
Here's resurrection we can understand,
This is the time, the very holy dot.

Ambassadors who bank in Rome and Greece
Feel sap in Washington and smile in French.
Even the President stares wistful, sees
The broad magnolia bud and wants the branch.

EDA LOU WALTON

LEDA, THE LOST

Was it because the breast had bruised the breast,
The ebony eye pierced into the blind brain,
That the plumed shoulder desired now to rest
On the warm earth, nor would the wingèd thighs strain
For ardours, nor the womb conceive again?

Eda Lou Walton

Though in her body there was born a bird,
Though from the flesh this arrow sped to stars,
Gleamed on the waters, and was ever heard
Singing to die and dying not, the hours
For Leda were a city without towers.

She, Leda, was more utterly cold
After that ravishment, that feathered clutch,
That caging of the wingèd. To hold
Song on the breast, conceiving song was much
But filled no after-pause, no waking touch.

Dark Leda stripped all naked by one blast,
Whom love would no more nest in than a tree
Uprooted from the earth within a vast
Whirling of blossoms, desired desolately
Only the love from which she was struck free:

Only the human weight, the tensing throat
That spoke no dream, nor wished a heavenly flight,
But loved that flesh, her flesh, as a fine boat
The full-lipped waters of the rivered night,
And sailed through her toward the morning light.

KAY BOYLE

FLYING FOXES AND OTHERS

Comb out your golden hair and whisper, monkeys, monkeys,
Come down the corridors of shade like evil children, monkeys,
Filch lice from such nocturnal beasts that sleep suspended,
Their wings folded, their heads hung downward, drugged with plunder.
Finger the black-gloved hands that clasp the branches, monkeys.

What is a bird but quiver to arrows, monkeys, monkeys,
That barb his flesh, target to filoplumes, monkeys,
Whose wounds he bears in every pore? But these sly moonlit foxes,
Furred russets or white, sleep as you stroke them, tittering.
The night arouses them like music the dancers, monkeys.
Such are decked out for flight as whores for love:
The chin-leafed bat bright orange, and the Indian squirrel
Garish, with peacock's voice for saber in his teeth;
The lizards of Malay are richly dressed and like to
Butterflies enameled, but once they fold their wings
The animal itself has seemed to disappear;
Asiatic frogs with webbed silver feet, such emerald-coated
Beauties parachute from trees, and weave their aerial nests
In leaves above the water; pralangers, with limbs spread,
Skim the lower airs. Inhabitants of Bachan include
A little flying 'possum, a fruit-pigeon, big and elegant,
With metallic green and rufous plumage. (Captain John Smith
Wrote from Virginia in 1612: "An opossum hath a head
Like a Swine, and a taile like a Rat, and is of the bignesse of a Cat.")
The jungles of Borneo swarm with tree-leeches and flying frogs.
The swift there fashions of saliva his edible good nest.

Comb out your hair for the feet of the dancers, monkeys, monkeys,
For the foxes waking with muzzles lifted, monkeys,
To the rot of fruit, sweet but invisible, spicing the trails of the air.

FRANCES FROST

FROM "WOMAN OF THIS EARTH"

1.

Before sheep came, before my fathers drove
the first grey flock into this pasture high
against the wide blue morning of their time,
the hollows were sweet with emptiness, the grass
bent down at summer's end and fed the earth.

My fathers strode the hills, my fathers climbed;
sunlight warmed the moving backs of sheep;
emptiness was filled and wild grass nibbled:
silence broke softly when beneath the deep
weight of moonlight young lambs cried and stumbled
against their mothers' flanks that smelled of sleep.

The moon is a heavy shadow on the harsh
anatomy of earth. The sheep are gone;
the pasture has returned to wildness, driven
with tangled and budded thickets toward the dawn.
My fathers' throats are stopped with earth, their mouths
forever crushed against the breast of stone.

2.

The history of earth is a moving of leaves in the sun
closing behind the bodies of men, as the grasses
close after the hare and the junipers after the fox.

There have been those who vanished into the summers
and did not return: whether they died in that country
or loved and put down their roots in it, none can tell.

They who returned sat old in the sun and stared,
mumbling of forests of leaves and of expeditions
ending under the flint of an unknown nation.

The young men went to this wilderness: not one among them
knew if his death would be legend or covered with leaves.

The history of earth is written in many breasts:
men speak of it in divers tongues, their throats
hoarse with the shout of it, taking again the lash

on their bloody backs and the steel in their ribs, inflicting
like wounds on their fellows. They speak of the fields they grubbed
and the cities they built, dragging the stones—the altars,
the stonehenge: they cry of the glory of man:
none knows if his death will be hard or his flesh desire it.

SHIRLEY BARKER

SONNETS FROM A SEQUENCE

XXI

A thin rain seeps along the apple boughs
That scratch and crawl against the windowpane.
You are content; the hay is in the mows,
The storm beats not too harshly on your grain.
Can nothing tempt you out of calm tonight?
Your lazy eyelids brush a tough tanned cheek.
What would you say if I should start upright
With the farewell that it is mine to speak?
Oh I could shake that patient poise of yours
And teach you pain, bewilderment and loss—
Grief of a man who knocks at shuttered doors
Above a sill that was his own to cross.
But since you look so like a weary boy,
I shall be still. The child may keep his toy,

XXIV

Down the black highway where no whisper stirs,
No light leans forth from towers touched with dawn;
One with all uncompanioned wanderers,
I straggle forth by bitter magic drawn.
This conquest into chaos offers more
Than a tight roof with tossing trees above,
Intangible environs to explore—
But you were warm, and breathing, and my love.
Never again shall I ignore a storm
As on those other nights when I have lain
Secure in flesh and mind. I am a form
That haunts unending roadways in the rain,
Or stumbles blindly over desert ground—
Seeking the thing no man has ever found.

MARY CAROLYN DAVIES

HUNGER

In that strange city
  Of being poor
I have lived all my life
  And more;

I have lived out from myself
  And from this place
Out through time,
  Through space.

I know what others suffered
  Before me;
No one who is hungry
  Can be quite free.

This is the only suffering there is
  Or was before,
Or will be, ever—
  Being poor.

To lose a lover,
  Does not shake the soul
Like a wet and broken shoe,
  Or an empty bowl,

Like the fear of no roof at night,
  And no hand to aid,
And most of all the fear
  Of being afraid.

Afraid of men because
  I have not that shield,
And the sword, of a round small coin
  To wield.

Soul agony is sad,
  But this is worse,
To be broken by the number
  Of pennies in a purse.

JOSEPH KALAR

PAPER MILL

Not to be believed, this blunt savage wind
Blowing in chill empty rooms, this tornado
Surging and bellying across the oily floor
Pushing men out in streams before it;
Not to be believed, this unseen hand
Weaving a filmy rust of spiderwebs
Over these turbines and grinding gears,
These snarling chippers and pounding jordans;
These fingers placed to lips saying shshsh;
Keep silent, keep silept, keep silent;
Not to be believed hardly, this clammy silence

Joseph Kalar

Where once feet stamped over the oily floor,
Dinnerpails clattered, voices rose and fell
In laughter, curses, and songs. Now the guts
Of this mill have ceased their rumbling, now
The fires are banked and red changes to black,
Steam is cold water, silence is rust, and quiet
Spells hunger. Look at these men, now,
Standing before the iron gates, mumbling,
"Who could believe it? Who could believe it?"

HAROLD LEWIS COOK

WARNING

You walk the hills, blind in your dreaming.
  You pace the valleys, and hear no sound.
A flower falls, a star falls,
  But neither, falling can astound

The hard, man-ridden mind that never—
  Save to the ways of man—will thrill.
No mountain frightens you, no ocean,
  And no rain-rotten daffodil.

The snake of silence soon will coil
  Around your narrow pulsing wrist,
His head lie pillowed in the palm
  Of that same hand your lover kissed.

You are the bread Time feeds upon,
  You are the sweet that tickles Death;
Between the bread and sweet there lies
  Only the little space of breath.

Your proud hair twisted in a root,
  You will, perhaps, remember Earth;
Your nail will learn the feel of stone,
  Your heel will measure a worm's girth.

PAUL ENGLE

ORION

Orion, tonight forsake your distant walking
And with your shining feet plunging the earth
Stoop to my humble house and pick me up,
I who have looked into your massive face
Long years of nights, and with my scared hands clutching
Tight at your belt, stride through the length of heaven,
The dog star yelping at your heels, beyond
The rainy Hyades.
Thrusting back the stars
Seek the farthest corner of the sky
Where the red of Mars dulls like a sumac leaf
The wind turns over, and Aldebaran
Is as a tiny flame seen flickeringly
In the deep wilderness of a friend's eye;
Where the hours with which we torture out our lives
On the cruel rack of days drift by like clouds
Casual in noon, beyond the sight
Of men who look to the sky and call with white
Teeth for rain.
And I can be alone
With your great golden body, where the bright
Fillet of the Milky Way is bound
Over the dark curved forehead of heaven, and time
Spills away forever on the worn stones
Of the inviolable years where foam
The sunlit and dissolving lives of men.

Then swing your club until it smashes down
The stars and heaps them at your feet like flaming
Eyes accusing the blood-burned hands that tore them
From bodies of living fire, and with an arm

Upholding my frail flesh and your flashing club
Circling over your head, lunge through the vast
Universes wherein our dazzling sun
Would blench to shadow—on through space as empty
As a rat skull hollowed by a raven's beak
To set me in the troubled towers of earth,
And strike with clenched fist once the ground, then leap
Again to heaven.
In later years when tired
Utterly of myself, and men and all
Their writhing sorrow and the earth's insistent
Hanging on to life, then I will go
To the dark hill beyond my house and lift
My hands up to the sky till they are silvered
With the pale starlight, and wave wanly to you,
Calling, "Orion, Orion, here am I."
And you will nod with the proud peace of those
Who are not of, but are, eternity,
And dip your club three times in fiery answer.

MACKINLAY KANTOR

APPOMATTOX

(April 9, 1865)

In April sun the dead march played
Without a drum to beat it.
A flag of truce was then arrayed,
And Lee went out to meet it.

All gray and braided was his vest,
Steel gray the heart inside him;
He turned his back against the west
Where Sheridan defied him.

And, *How-de-do* . . . in April time
Spring tore her flowered packet . . .
Grant looked as if without a dime,
And wore a private's jacket.

The gauntlets touched, and someone coughed,
And one put on his glasses—
The bugles trilled like hawks aloft
Beyond the trampled grasses—

"Horses and mules to be retained:
They'll need them for their plowing,"
The pens declared. The door was gained.
The victors all were bowing.

A hundred, hundred months have passed . . .
O, don't you cry, Susannah!
And Lee upon the steps stood fast,
Nor heard the North's hosanna.

He looked to where his army lay
Through all the warming weather.
He stood without a word to say,
And struck his hands together.

CHRISTOPHER LA FARGE

FROM PROLOGUE, EACH TO THE OTHER

Here is no tragedy. These are my days
Life-weighted, turned and measured in the scale
Of my own inches: only that, no atom more,
No plus nor minus subscript to its sum.
They tell me, those who know the incredible mass
Of man's recorded cries, that in each one
Born to the burden of unasked existence

There lives one story. Very well, here's mine
Laid out in words, each verb a piece of me,
Each noun an echo, every adjective
Reflecting the hot circumstance of living
Within my bounds, my flesh, my blood, my eyes,
My fingers crooked to catch the fantasy
Of explanation. Here's a crackling light
Flung from my poles will make my flesh transparent,
My skeleton appear before its due time,
Untendoned, bare, supported by a light
Beyond our understanding. But my life,
The reason I am I, the flesh I bear,
The colour of my eyes, the thoughts that throw
Expression in the conduct of my bones,
Are all past comprehension. In your eyes
I shall find reason by your reasoning,
Exist unshadowed if your light be such
That it surround me, compass me, contain me:
Read then with eyes, but let your thoughts be waves
That tune to the reception of your heart.

WINFIELD TOWNLEY SCOTT

THE GAME

Walking out in morning snow
Traman has devised a game.
By taking steps longer and slow
He can make his stride the same
As someone's, whose he doesn't know,
That came this way before he came.

He lunges patiently and long
A block or so, and then gives out—
His balance wasn't ever strong,

Now knee muscles all in doubt
He wavers in his thought or song
And stops to breathe and look about.

Between the rabble of the trees
The sky shines like a kindly fate;
Traman, in snow up to his knees,
Learns not to labor but to wait.
With only his own legs to please
He goes again—goes his own gait.

LLOYD FRANKENBERG

LETTER TO THE NIGHT

Now in the night where the nameless crickets make
speech without noun or verb, only the pure
syllable of endurance, what are the sounds
of my existence, what dry twigs of sense
rubbing together produce the sound of me?

We live in the perpetual silence of things
that speak but they do not speak to us nor hear us.
We are all things chattering to ourselves in the silence.
The gull cries like a baby to itself.
The sea moans to itself in the middle of night.

The moon says waves upon the air.
The moon says words that are not words
that the sea in silence listening repeats
altering and enlarging upon their sense.
The stars also saying the same word over
ring their changes upon it to make a sentence
stiller and more profound than the sound of the sea.

With a thousand loud and mute tongues the earth is talking.
The birds are singing from dawn to dusk, what songs?

What are they saying to us that we may hear?
We meet in twos and threes and tell our names.
We talk our words into each other's ears.
For nothing else says a word to us, nothing ever
speaks to us. There is only the sound of silence.
And we cannot say to the sea, to the wind, to the night,
to the bird in the fog picking dust from the dust at our door—

whatever it was we wished to say; whatever
the thoughts of this night are that it thinks around me.
For all our songs are to the night.

WILLARD MAAS

NO SEASON FOR OUR SEASON

The little road grows narrow up the hill
Where lovers walk beyond the streetcar's end,
Two on two on pathways, bridges, beach:
Sky split with orange fire as big stars fall,

Streak heaven with a pen of rosy ink.
The violets and the crocus come to spring,
Sea turned to silver where the red sun sank:
But not the mouth of love again on spring.

Not now upon the evening, leafless street,
Sweet head, the violence of the Nordic eyes,
The image cast up from the nightmare sleep:
Beware of falling bricks, earthquakes, fires.

Catalpa and ailanthus in backyards,
The striped deck chairs on tar-paper roofs,
The naked men sunbathing, comic sheets,
And headlines of the bombing of the city.

Not summer, spring, not autumn, winter,
(Soft snow shaken from the overcoat,
Wet feet from where the ice broke on the stream)
No season but we fear the shrapnel dream.

No fear but that we fear our very love,
The eyes that look upon the loving boy,
Sweet sickness on the subway, on the terrace,
The early sunlight perfumed with torn groins.

Spring comes late. No season for our season.
Not love for lovers, not the hand to touch,
The dark-haired breast upon the tender breasts,
The tongue upon the ear, upon the mouth.

Descending with the year, the gargoyle song,
The python hiss gargantuan with hate,
Stand up and drain the very lung of love
Against the enemy before the gate.

JOY DAVIDMAN

PRAYER AGAINST INDIFFERENCE

When wars and ruined men shall cease
To vex my body's house of peace,
And bloody children lying dead
Let me lie softly in my bed
To nurse a whole and sacred skin,
Break roof and let the bomb come in.

Knock music at the templed skull
And say the world is beautiful,
But never let the dweller lock
Its house against another knock;
Never shut out the gun, the scream,
Never lie blind within a dream.

Within these walls the brain shall sit
And chew on life surrounding it;
Eat the soft sunlight hour and then
The bitter taste of bleeding men;
But never underneath the sun
Shall it forget the scream, the gun.

Let me have eyes I need not shut;
Let me have truth at my tongue's root;
Let courage and the brain command
The honest fingers of my hand;
And when I wait to save my skin
Break roof and let my death come in.

KENNETH PATCHEN

THE FOX

Because the snow is deep
Without spot that white falling through white air

Because she limps a little—bleeds
Where they shot her

Because hunters have guns
And dogs have hangmen's legs

Because I'd like to take her in my arms
And tend her wound

Because she can't afford to die
Killing the young in her belly

I don't know what to say of a soldier's dying
Because there are no proportions in death.

RICHARD EBERHART

MAZE

I have a tree in my arm,
There are two hounds in my feet,
The earth can do me no harm.
And the lake of my eyes is sweet.

But a fire has burnt the tree down,
I have no blood for the hounds.
Why has the will made me a crown
For a human mind that has bounds?

Who made the tree? Who made fire?
The hounds have gone back to the master.
The earth has killed my desire
That leaped up faster and faster.

It is man did it, man,
Who imagined imagination,
And he did what man can,
He uncreated creation.

There is no tree in my arm,
I have no hounds in my feet,
The earth can soothe me and harm,
And the lake of my eyes is a cheat.

KIMBALL FLACCUS

DANCE OF DEATH

Most pines that fight their way to upper light
Grow tall and straight for ever and a day;
You might believe them dead in the near night
Of forest gloom, so still they are, and grey,

So smooth and cold and hard and gummed with mastic.
But if you blaze the trunk the sap will spurt,
The bark will curl, reluctant and elastic,
As though the tree were conscious of its hurt;
And peering up, you see the plumes aloft,
And looking down, you note that roots are firm;
Like anchor chains they sink into the soft
Waves of the yielding moss, defy the worm.
Yet even pines, those regal martinets,
Played false by pride of posture, know defeat
When icy gales advance with blustering threats
And mark their prey; though regiments entreat
Respite and mercy, when the storm is spent,
The slain, like soldiers, lie on splintered sides,
On comrades lean the wounded, still unbent,
Uprooted, angled sharp by aerial tides.
And when these die they hardly know themselves;
The brittle wood is seasoned by the weather,
Decay creeps from the ground, the sharp worm delves,
The pines dance on, the quick and dead together.

EDWARD WEISMILLER

WORLD, DEFINED

Not this dark stand of pines that house
Quick deer, may be the world; not boughs
Of hemlock checkered with the sun,
Nor red oak boles where squirrels run
Scolding against the furtive breeze.
The world is no safe thatch of trees;

It is not any hummock thinned
With blizzards, where the fox, down wind,
Crouches to watch the mouthy pack

Laboring at his artful track.
The world is not a sentinel hill,
Though fear breeds many foxes.

Still
I want discernment, I suppose.
But any poor, dull rabbit knows
The world is bramble, and a hole
Shared with the adder and the mole.

DELMORE SCHWARTZ

THE HEAVY BEAR

"the withness of the body"
Whitehead

The heavy bear who goes with me,
A manifold honey to smear his face,
Clumsy and lumbering here and there,
The central ton of every place,
The hungry beating brutish one
In love with candy, anger, and sleep,
Crazy factotum, dishevelling all,
Climbs the building, kicks the football,
Boxes his brother in the hate-ridden city.

Breathing at my side, that heavy animal,
That heavy bear who sleeps with me,
Howls in his sleep for a world of sugar,
A sweetness intimate as the water's clasp,
Howls in his sleep because the tight-rope
Trembles and shows the darkness beneath.
—The strutting show-off is terrified,
Dressed in his dress-suit, bulging his pants,
Trembles to think that his quivering meat
Must finally wince to nothing at all.

That inescapable animal walks with me,
Has followed me since the black womb held,
Moves where I move, distorting my gesture,
A caricature, a swollen shadow,
A stupid clown of the spirit's motive,
Perplexes and affronts with his own darkness,
The secret life of belly and bone,
Opaque, too near, my private, yet unknown,
Stretches to embrace the very dear
With whom I would walk without him near,
Touches her grossly, although a word
Would bare my heart and make me clear,
Stumbles, flounders, and strives to be fed
Dragging me with him in his mouthing care,
Amid the hundred million of his kind,
The scrimmage of appetite everywhere.

MARIE DE L. WELCH

LORD OF EDEN

Adam, walking in the summer garden,
Walking in the unfallen dew,
Looked on the animals, the other marvels,
New to him as he was new.

A tawny bounding, Adam saw,
A waving tuft and a lopping paw;
Roaring past him a great Thing went.
Adam shook with astonishment.

The eyes of Adam stretched his lids,
The knees of Adam doubled under;
And when he had his breath again—
Lion! said Adam, to soothe his wonder.

Lord of Eden, Adam rose.
Lion! and only Adam knows!
Adam sees and takes and tames;
Lord of Eden, Knower of Names.

Adam walked in the morning garden,
Marvel on marvel to perceive,
Staring, trembling, Lord of Eden:
Lion! Eagle! Serpent! . . . Eve!

JAMES AGEE

RAPID TRANSIT

Squealing under city stone
  The millions on the millions run,
Every one a life alone,
  Every one a soul undone:

There all the poisons of the heart
  Branch and abound like whirling brooks
And there through every useless art
  Like spoiled meat on a butcher's hooks

Pore forth upon their frightful kind
  The faces of each ruined child:
The wrecked demeanors of the mind
  That now is tamed, and once was wild.

OSCAR WILLIAMS

THE MAN COMING TOWARD YOU

The man coming toward you is falling forward on all fronts;
He has just come in from the summer hot box of circumstance,
His obedient arm pulls a ticket from the ticket machine,

Oscar Williams

A bell announces to the long tables his presence on the scene;
The room is crowded with Last Suppers and the air is angry;
The halleluiahs lift listless heads; the man is hungry.

He looks at the people, the rings of lights, the aisles, the chairs,
They mass and attack his eyes and they take him unawares,
But in a moment it is over and the immense hippopotamus cries
And swims away to safety in the vast past of his eyes;
The weeks recoil before the days, the years before the months;
The man is hungry and keeps moving on all fronts.

His hair is loosening, his teeth are at bay, he breathes fear,
His nails send futile tendrils into the belly of the atmosphere;
Every drop of his blood is hanging loose in the universe;
His children's faces everywhere bring down the college doors;
He is growing old on all fronts; his foes and his friends
Are bleeding behind invisible walls bedecked with dividends;

His wife is aging, and his skin puts on its anonymous gloves;
The man is helpless, surrounded by two billion hates and loves;
Look at him squirm inside his clothes, the harpies around his ears,
In just one minute his brothers will have aged four thousand years.
Who records his stupendous step on the delicate eardrum of Chance?
The man coming toward you is marching forward on all fronts.

RAYMOND HOLDEN

STORM OVER ROCKEFELLER CENTER

We have lived long enough to know
That there's no meaning in the snow,
Since the gone seasons all return.
We have lived long enough to learn.
Yet this is savage, this cold cloud
That makes the growing tower loud.

Weather, with neither heart nor mind,
Has wit enough to be unkind,
Unkindly saying, fiercely showing
That we, for all our magic knowing,
All our designs and computations,
Our strength and skill of hand that fashions
This upward steel that need not climb,
Are heavier of heart and limb
Than metal. Blow, O briny chill!
Life is a tragic gesture still,
And you are right to mark it such
With your unbreathable death's touch.
We've learned the random thing there is
Behind a monument like this:
A hope that some miraculous act
May compensate for muddled fact;
A dream that since men stand aloof
From elements and need a roof,
A ninety-story roof will do
More than the rafters over two;
A desperate and upward thrust
Of mad and misdirected lust
To kill the uncomfortable rage
Of living in a lifeless age.
Blow wintriness, blow rainy wind
Upon this building. It is blind.
Its seed was fouled with a disease
That strikes a thing where that thing sees—
Infection taken of a loin
That quickens at the sound of coin—
The insolent pox of vanity
From which no living man is free.
Infuriating air, blow, blow,
While we move shiftlessly below,
Looking up through a stinging tear
At that false tower, lost in fear
Of what will happen to us when

Raymond Holden

The unbuilt things catch up with men—
When the loosé house of living falls
And frees the vermin of its walls,
And time, grown eager to regain
The gift it put into the brain,
Comes knocking at the ransacked skull
And finds it empty, the purse full.

JOSEPHINE MILES

ENTRY

Come, shall we come out of the listening season into the city,
Out of the confidential forest, the undecided bloom
Into the noncommittal
Metropolitan room.

Fifth and Main, for instance, does not put forth leaves,
It is an intersection that keeps to itself alone,
Cement having just that much more
Corner reserve than stone.

There is less, for instance, of blowing wherever listeth
And being numberless. Counter, office, car,
Know to the decimal where they are going
And where they are.

There is more, for example, of the clean cut heroic and durable,
The street and linoleum cool after a good beating,
The seventh and eighth floors outshouldering sun
At every meeting.

Come, shall we come out of the murmurous decline of leaves,
The falling hints and windy expectation,
To city where the small matter is put down already
To depreciation.

THOMAS HORNSBY FERRIL

SOMETHING STARTING OVER

You don't see buffalo skulls very much any more
On the Chugwater buttes or down the Cheyenne plains,
And when you roll at twilight over a draw,
With ages in your heart and hills in your eyes,
You can get about as much from a Model-T,
Stripped and forgotten in a sage arroyo,
As you can from asking the blue peaks over and over:

"Will something old come back again tonight?
Send something back to tell me what I want."

I do not know how long forever is,
But today is going to be long long ago,
There will be flint to find, and chariot wheels,
And silver saxophones the angels played,
So I ask myself if I can still remember
How a myth began this morning and how the people
Seemed hardly to know that something was starting over.

Oh, I get along all right with the old old times,
I've seen them sifting the ages in Nebraska
On Signal Butte at the head of the Kiowa creek.
(You can drink from the spring where old man Roubadeau
Had his forge and anvil up in Cedar Valley,
You can look back down the valley toward Scottsbluff
And still see dust clouds on the Oregon trail.)
I entered the trench they cut through Signal Butte,
And I pulled a buffalo bone from the eight-foot layer,
And I watched the jasper shards and arrowheads
Bounce in the jigging screen through which fell dust
Of antelope and pieces of the world
Too small to have a meaning for the sifters.

One of them said, when I held the bone in my hand:
"This may turn out to be the oldest bison
In North America," and I could have added:
"How strange, for this is one of the youngest hands
That ever squeezed a rubber bulb to show
How helium particles shoot through water vapor."
And the dry wind out of Wyoming might have whispered:
"Today is going to be long long ago."

I know how it smells and feels to sift the ages,
But something is starting over and I say
It's just as beautiful to see the yucca
And cactus blossoms rising out of a Ford
In a sage arroyo on the Chugwater flats,
And pretend you see the carbon dioxide slipping
Into the poverty weed, and pretend you see
The root hairs of the buffalo grass beginning
To suck the vanadium steel of an axle to pieces,
An axle that took somebody somewhere,
To moving picture theatres and to banks,
Over the ranges, over the cattle-guards,
Took people to dance-halls and cemeteries—
I like to think of them that way together:
Dance-halls and cemeteries, bodies beginning
To come together in dance-halls where the people
Seem hardly to know that hymns are beginning too;
There's a hymn in the jerk of the sand-hill crawl of the dancers
And all the gods are shining in their eyes;
Then bodies separating and going alone
Into the tilting uphill cemeteries,
Under the mesas, under the rimrock shadows.

I can look at an axle in a sage arroyo,
And hear them whispering, the back-seat lovers,
The old myth-makers, starting something over.

DAVID WOLFF

WHILE WE SLEPT

At four in the morning the smoke of the forded river,
a screen of leaves, and the best of a nervous generation
cleverly trained and bombed and dying forever.

While we slept in the tangled womb, we were armed and counted;
later as a child among people more sad and powerful,
we delighted in stars while graves were being planted.

Growing up, swimming, feeling the mind grow harder
beside the brilliant lakes, the sunlight between wars,—
our innocent names were figured in plans of murder.

Cool statesmen flying above our fears, protracted
crisis on crisis, till we cried to fire,—
unknown which way their promise of death was directed.

Autumn maneuvers and the praised betrayal,
September when we loved as in a burning house,
while ranks of metal were rolling to their empty trial.

Feeding us nitrate, but keeping the useful reflex,
our lungs on file and our probable loss discounted,
they will call us to lie awake in their deathly barracks.

Say no to the heroine, to the guilty sense of outrage
no, to the priest of immaculate nails, say no, no
to the name-bands massed, and the wet thrills of public courage.

Refuse their glory and their indignation,
their empire and their monument of the exploding plane
defending the free routes of the profitable ocean!

David Wolff

Our freedom is simpler: white hills, and weather uncertain,
our presence unmarked on official maps, and naked
embracing in the afternoon room with the rainy curtain.

If this be treason now, and our poems imprisoned,
our nerves and weapons given triggers of despair,
then, let our thoughts be deadly, our deaths be reasoned:

Defending not what we have, the kindly fortune,
the research of years in diseases of poverty,
the islands, the gold at Fort Knox, and the English porcelain,

But fighting for what we have not, and equal to suffer
wounds consciously in desire of life, of sun
universal, and the abolition of the poor.

KENNETH SLADE ALLING

DUALITY

The facets of the flesh require
For their reflections outward fire.

But all unfaceted the soul
Shines from an inner aureole.

They are dissimilar, these jewels,
Lighted by flames from different fuels.

As equally dissimilar
As is the planet and the star.

But stars and planets light the face
Of all the universe of space,

And the dim universe of me
Needs likewise its duality.

ROBERT FITZGERALD

ELEGY

What should you know at last when spirit's
Spun from you, bobbin of bone, ghostbody in the sun?
Enumerate your keen, wind-feathered
Moods up-tossed and patterned in swift weather
With colors of skirts and flowers;

And those more constant images that serve
To guide the blinded time: the scent of sickness
Over blankets in a cold room, the shades drawn
At evening, rosaries told years ago
By frail hands motionless or moving
Wisely in soft light, and the strange house in spring
With dust under the canvas bellies of the chairs,
The new screens painted and the flowering wind. . . .

You are grown old to be thus disembodied
By a few dreams pulled gently, and would be
Thinned out of mind if I should sever in you
The nervous strand of sorrow. God be with you;
When I have touched this only I shall leave you,
And walk very gladly and quietly out of doors,
My trousers rustling round my legs like leaves
In the slow autumn air, the still fountains.

LAURA RIDING

THE WIND SUFFERS

The wind suffers of blowing,
The sea suffers of water,
The fire suffers of burning,
And I of a living name.

Laura Riding

As stone suffers of stoniness,
As light of its shiningness,
As birds of their wingedness,
So I of my whoness.

And what the cure of all this?
What the not and not suffering?
What the better and later of this?
What the more me of me?

How for the pain-world to be
More world and no pain?
How for the old rain to fall
More wet and more dry?

How for the wilful blood to run
More salt-red and sweet-white?
And how for me in my actualness
To more shriek and more smile?

By no other miracles,
By the same knowing poison,
By an improved anguish,
By my further dying.

HENRY RAGO

MEETING OF A POETRY SOCIETY

You know the password, then. You have your instructions.
If you must go now, keep among the shadows:
The moon is our enemy: take care
And cross no open fields. You know too well
We are already suspect: keep well hidden
And trust no man until he prove himself
Friend to our cause. Be swift: be deadly: kill
On the mere rumor of betrayal. We must take no risk.

You swore your loyalty on full knowledge of the facts:
The dangers were not concealed: you gave your pledge.
You were told you would die before the victory,
And die alone. You signed. Now you have enemies.

The moon is behind a cloud. This is good time to leave.
Remember, we must act discreetly, carry no papers.
If they ask who we are say we have lost our names.
If they ask what we want say we do not remember.

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Come, shall we come out of the listening season into the city, 637
Divine perfection, we have sinned, 'tis true: 611
Down the black highway where no whisper stirs, 619
Here is no tragedy. These are my days, 624
I have a tree in my arm, 630
I wish I could remember, 609
In April the dead march played, 623
In that strange city, 619
Most pines that fight their way to upper light, 630
Not this dark stand of pines that house, 631
Not to be believed, this blunt savage wind, 620
Now in the night where the nameless crickets make, 626
Orion, tonight forsake your distant walking, 622
Squealing under city stone, 634
The facets of the flesh require, 641
The heavy bear who goes with me, 632
The little road grows narrow up the hill, 627
The man coming toward you is falling forward on all fronts, 634
The wind suffers of blowing, 642
Walking out in morning snow, 625
Was it because the breast had bruised the breast, 614
We have lived long enough to know, 635
We stood up before day, 610
What should you know at last when spirit's, 642
When wars and ruined men shall cease, 628
You don't see buffalo skulls very much any more, 638
You know the password, then. You have your instructions, 643
You walk the hills, blind in your dreaming. 621